

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT
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September/October 2003

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

Jabiluka stopped!

Rehabilitation under way

Tuesday August 12th 2003 was a landmark day in the campaign to stop the Jabiluka uranium mine in Kakadu. On this day the trucks started rolling to begin rehabilitation works on site. Mirrar traditional owners and thousands of people from around Australia and internationally were successful in stopping further construction in 1999. Now the campaign has taken another major step with the 50,000 tonnes of uranium ore already extracted, but never processed, going back down the mine-shaft at Jabiluka.

Since the discovery of uranium in 1971, the word Jabiluka has meant conflict over resources. Jabiluka has posed some of the big questions of our time: what rights do indigenous people really have over their country? Are some places simply too valuable to sacrifice to industrialisation? Are mining rights more important than human rights? Who decides how our future will look?

Rehabilitation of the Jabiluka mine site closes a chapter on this 30 year resource conflict and struggle of ideas. The hugely successful campaign waged by the Mirrar people in conjunction with environment groups and thousands of activists across the country and around the world has

generated very positive results. The latest chapter of the campaign began in 1996 with the election of the Howard Government and a renewed attempt to

weak uranium market.

But the 5000 Australians who protested for over 8 months in Kakadu in 1998 (527 of whom were arrested in peaceful demonstrations), and the many other thousands who have marched, written and prayed for an end to Jabiluka have an understanding beyond any public relations positioning. They have affirmed the ability of ordinary people to collectively achieve extraordinary things - to shape events, exert political influence and become future makers.

The Mirrar people never accepted the inevitability of mining at Jabiluka, despite constant company, industry and government assur-

Yvonne Margarula appearing in 'The Weekend Australian' magazine, 18-19 October 1997

mine Jabiluka. Seven years later with rehabilitation underway, indigenous rights, anti-nuclear and environmental campaigners have achieved one of their most significant victories in Australian history.

As in all conflicts that are resolved or en-route to resolution, the players race to imprint their version of history on the collective memory. The mining industry may spin the outcome as a maturing or a "greening" of the industry or a cost-saving exercise, government may attribute the outcome to a continuing

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**Insert—20th Birthday flyer!!
Bring all your friends!!**

ances that the project would go ahead. In their struggle to protect their country and culture they made Jabiluka a millstone for one of the world's largest resource companies and have redefined future resource conflicts in Australia and internationally by elevating the rights of indigenous people everywhere to determine what happens to their country and their community.

Currently negotiations are underway on an agreement between the traditional owners, the NLC and the mining company that would give the Mirrar legal veto rights any future development of Jabiluka. ERA have publicly committed to incorporating a veto right for Mirrar in this agreement. The Mirrar have been resolute in their opposition to mining. Last year Yvonne Margarula, the senior Mirrar traditional owner declared, " We will continue to resist more mining on Mirrar country. We have no choice - this is our land and our life, we can never leave, we must protect it."

By Christmas 50,000 tonnes of uranium ore will be put back down the hole at Jabiluka and the mine shaft will be sealed. A mine proposed to start in 1979, then again in 1999, remains halted because of indigenous and community opposition. Uranium that would have become radioactive waste in nations around the world remains inert and entombed. We have forced the carcinogenic atomic genie back into the bottle.

Despite the rehabilitation announcement the Jabiluka mineral lease will, for now, remain. As long as there is a mineral lease in

Kakadu there is the risk that somebody will want to mine it at some future point. Retiring the mineral lease and incorporating the area into the jointly managed Kakadu National Park would signal the final end to the Jabiluka story and ensure the permanent protection of the region.

However - for now, and hopefully forever - the book is closed on plans to mine Jabiluka and the efforts of those who have acted to safeguard Kakadu and to move away from a future of imposed industrial developments and radioactive threats should be celebrated.

The efforts to stop Jabiluka saw a campaign that travelled from the wetlands and rock country of Kakadu to our lounge rooms and boardrooms, to our churches, campuses and city streets, to the Australian and European Parliaments and UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. All these efforts have made a real and potent difference - working and walking together with courage, creativity and commitment we have stopped Jabiluka and helped create the space needed for a better future for the people and country of Kakadu, and the world.

-Mark Wakeham and Dave Sweeney
(ACF Anti-nukes campaigner)

Thankyou ECNT members and supporters

ECNT has played a critical role in the campaign to stop Jabiluka by working closely with the Mirrar traditional owners and other environment groups in all elements of the Jabiluka campaign.

ECNT supporters have made this possible. Thanks to all of you for your continuing support on this issue over the past 7 years. At times the Jabiluka campaign has dominated ECNT's efforts over this period- a huge win has made this all worthwhile. ECNT will continue to work with the Mirrar to look at options for a sustainable post-mining economy in the Kakadu region, however this win does open up further space for us to focus on other big issues across the north, as we've been increasingly doing over recent years.

On October 31st there will be national day of celebration for the Jabiluka win. Celebrations will be held around the country to mark the rehabilitation of Jabiluka and the signing of an agreement which will give the Mirrar veto rights over any future attempts to mine Jabiluka, and to mark the successful efforts of all of those who have been involved in the campaign.

ECNT is currently planning a Darwin or Kakadu event- more will be revealed at the ECNT birthday celebrations. We hope you can be a part of these celebrations wherever you are around Australia.

For further details see:
<http://www.environment.org.au>
or visit the ECNT website closer to October 31.

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair

Farewell to Gary

All of us at ECNT would like to thank Gary for his great work at ECNT over the past 2 ½ years. Gary has been fantastic to work with- he's got Cool Communities off the ground and kicking goals, and he's also undertaken some really detailed and useful research into the impacts of gas exploitation, uranium exploration in Arnhem Land and most recently looking at ways to transform the Jabiru region into an ecologically sustainable region. We're not letting him out of our reaches too easily though- we've got him doing some lobbying around the proposed McArthur mine expansion while he's in Europe and we're hoping to find some interesting projects for him next year when he returns to Darwin.

Bon Voyage Gary and thanks for your fantastic commitment.

Daly River Campaign Update

Territorians and people all over Australia are quickly becoming aware of proposals by the NT Government to expand large scale irrigated agriculture into the Daly Basin. With the potential for vast areas of healthy forests and bushland to be cleared and billions of litres of water to pump from the river and from groundwater aquifers every year, the Daly River is a priority environment issue in the NT.

The NT cabinet is **NOW** making a decision about the future of the Daly, so contacting your local member or the Chief Minister's office and voicing your concerns about Government plans for increased treeclearing and water extraction is more important than ever:

Hon Clare Martin - Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
Ph: (08) 8981 4016
Fax (08) 8941 2661
Email: clare.martin@nt.gov.au
GPO Box 3146, Darwin NT, 0801

"Save the Daly" – send in a postcard. The Environment Centre has released tens of thousands of postcards across the Northern Territory and Australia wide. The postcards focus on NT Government plans to expand large scale agriculture and are designed to be sent into the Chief Minister Clare Martin's office. If you receive a postcard don't hesitate to attach a stamp and send in to the Chief Minister.

Outcomes from Daly River public meeting –

The ECNT organised a public meeting at the Museum of the Northern Territory on the 6th of August. With over 150 people in attendance the meeting showed the huge public concern over the Daly River. The meeting was ad-

ressed by speakers from Traditional Owners and the NLC, AFANT, NTU, the Daly River Community Development Association and the Minister for Primary Industries and Environment the Hon Chris Burns.

There was strong criticism from a number of speakers of NT Government proposals to expand large scale irrigated agriculture, whilst leaving the community poorly informed about these plans. There were also calls from some sectors to introduce a moratorium on treeclearing permits and water extraction licenses until a comprehensive planning process was completed for the Daly Basin.

In response to this meeting the Cattlemen's Association NT organised a public meeting at the Douglas Daly research farm. The ECNT attended to provide our views to those in attendance together with NLC and AFANT.

The NT Government released figures on plans to allocate a massive 265 billion litres of water from the river and groundwater every year. This is over 700% increase on current water extraction rates in the Daly Basin. Approximately 150 000 hectares would be approved for clearing for large scale irrigation schemes over the next ten years.

There were no tangible outcomes from the meeting and the ECNT clearly laid out a policy of not supporting any future landclearing or massive increases in water extraction in the Daly Basin. With over 200 000 hectares already cleared in the Daly Basin, more clearing will only accelerate impacts such as soil erosion and loss of native wildlife.

-Henry Boer

Upcoming Daly film night

Deckchair Cinema - Tuesday 7th October 2003 – 6.30 –9pm

"Wildness" the story of Tasmania's most famous nature photographers Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis and their quest to save the Lake Pedder and the Franklin River from the 1950's to the 19890's. ALSO the beautiful animated "Story of Rosy Dock" from the book by Jeannie Baker, which tells the story, set in the Finke River, of how human activity causes un-

expected changes to the natural landscape. Prior to the movie will be a presentation on Daly River issues from the ECNT and other speakers.

If you want to see this photo by Peter Dombroski in glorious colour and on the large screen, come to this event!!!

ECNT's mid-term report for the Labor Government

Its now over two years since the Martin Labor Government was elected. We thought it a good time to prepare a mid-term report card on how the Martin Government is performing on environment issues.

Bouquets-

Renewable energy initiatives- The NT Government, with Commonwealth support, continues to expand renewable energy infrastructure in the NT with some exciting solar power projects at Kings Canyon and Bulman and a mimosa biofuel project on the Adelaide River flood-plains. Recently government announced a new 'Make the Switch' program which aims to high-light funding opportunities available to communities who want to switch from diesel power generation to renewable energy sources.

Review of Parks- Soon after being elected the Martin Government was alerted to the fact that the majority of the NT's National Parks and Conservation reserves had been declared illegally in an attempt to side-step Native Title rights. Since then the Labor Government has been negotiating with the Land Councils to increase joint management of reserves and to prepare a new Parks Masterplan which will hopefully see the Parks system being extended significantly and Traditional Owners across the NT benefiting more from the Reserve system.

Freedom of Information Legislation- The Labor Government delivered the Territory's first Freedom of Information Act, which should open up Government record-keeping and policy development to public scrutiny. Whilst the Act is yet to be properly road-tested and there are some areas of the Act that we would like to see strengthened and costs of using the Act reduced, we now have a level of access to information that is unprecedented in the NT.

Cane toads action- The renewed Environment and Sustainable Development government committee began its work by looking at options for cane toad control and eradication. This was a welcome change from the previous Government's and Parks and Wildlife Commission's blindfold approach on the issue. A proposed fence across Cobourg Peninsula and the relocation of vulnerable species to islands are small but positive responses to the cane toads' incursion.

Rehabilitation bonds for mines- After ongoing campaigning by the ECNT the NT Government has finally increased rehabilitation bonds for operating mines in the NT. We're unsure of whether the securities currently held by Government are now adequate (though we have asked for this information from Minister Henderson's office to no avail), however there has been some improvement in this area.

New penalties for marine pollution, illegal landclearing and illegal burning- heavy new fine schedules for environmental breaches have been announced by Government. We look forward to implementation...

Approval of Jabiluka rehabilitation- The Martin Government recently approved the application to rehabilitate Jabiluka uranium mine. While this was a formality it was a refreshing departure from the previous Government's 'at all costs'

approach on Jabiluka.

Ruling out of nuclear waste dump- The NT Labor Party opposed an NT-based nuclear waste dump at its 2003 conference.

Increased public transport funding- Prior to coming in to office the Labor Party promised increased funding for public transport. By our reading of the budget documents they have delivered on this- just- with minor increases in funding and a slight expansion of bus services in the rural area. More please.

Support for Desert Knowledge- The NT Government has become a major player in the Desert Knowledge project based in Alice Springs and is supporting the development of a Centre for Desert Knowledge.

Rapid Creek corridor- A small area, but a hard-fought issue. The NT Government has committed to retaining the Rapid Creek Corridor as public land managed for conservation purposes.

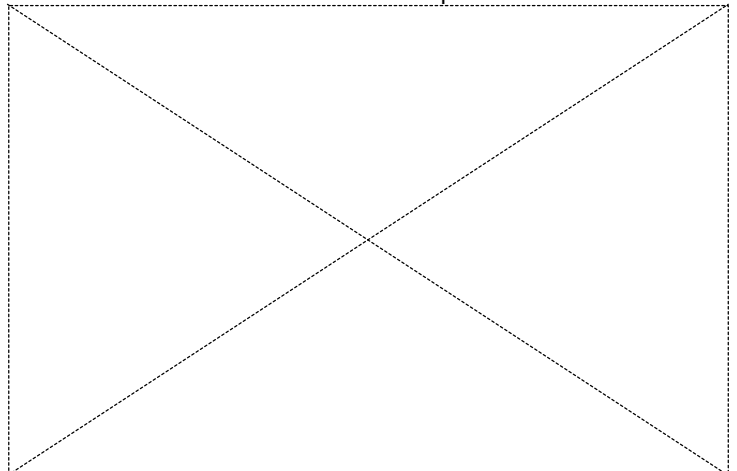
The Jury's out

Darwin Harbour Plan of Management- While the process for the development of the plan has been good, we're still waiting with baited breath to see if it delivers the goods in terms of conservation and environmental protection.

Northern Territory Coastal Policy- The Labor Government has begun a long-needed coastal policy development process that ECNT has been closely engaged with. We're hopeful that the policy will deliver some good conservation outcomes but its early days.

Government resource use- The new Litter Abatement Strategy aims to reduce Government resource use and ensure Government Departments source environmentally friendly products. If implemented properly it could deliver a major reduction in resource use.

Landclearing controls- The Northern Territory Government introduced new interim landclearing controls in December 2002. Whilst the controls have required a level of environ-



Landclearing protest at Parliament House. Photo: ECNT



mental assessment for all clearing they have a) not applied to Pastoral lands or Litchfield Shire, and b) failed to prevent broad-scale clearing in areas like the Daly. A review of landclearing policy and guidelines across all tenures is underway and must introduce a rapid phase out of broad scale clearing.

NT Planning Act review- still waiting to see if this one delivers improved standing for third parties, simplifies the planning scheme and encourages public input.

Brickbats

Tropical Knowledge strategy- While the idea of a Tropical Knowledge Strategy could help develop knowledge-based, non-extractive industries in the Top End, so far this so-called strategy is nothing more than a re-badging of existing programs.

Mining in National Parks- The Labor Party in Opposition promised to rule out mining in National Parks. In government they changed their mind. We now have two levels of protection for Parks in the NT- there are Parks that can be mined, and Parks that can't be mined. A very disappointing back-flip at the behest of an out of step NT minerals industry.

Container Deposit Legislation- As above. In Opposition the Labor Party supported CDL and promised to introduce it subject to public support. Public consultations demonstrated overwhelming support and yet the Government has backed down, taking \$500,000 from the Beverage Industry annually to fund less controversial, and less effective, litter management and recycling programs. The shiny-suited lobbyists from the Beverage Industry have defeated the community aspirations.

NHT bungling- As reported in last month's newsletter due to bungling by both the Commonwealth and NT Governments many community landcare projects around the Territory missed out on priority projects funding and received funding late resulting in the loss of many experienced land managers from the NT.

Daly development- Days after the Labor Government was elected around 20,000 hectares of public land in the Daly (at Stray Creek) was sold with tenure upgrade incentives and free water licences for ten years. Treeclearing permits over a number of these blocks have since been issued. While the CLP Government had planned this sale the same public servants that were running the show in CLP days are still trying to carve up the Daly with further subdivisions. The NT Government needs to urgently introduce a new policy in the Daly which prevent large scale treeclearing, subdivision of pastoral leases and allocation of free water licences.

Wickham Point debacle- Whilst the CLP Government directed Phillips to the Wickham Point site for their LNG Plant, Labor did nothing to ensure that common sense prevailed. Now Labor rezoning has most of Wickham Point slated for industrial development, while any further gas infrastructure will be at Glyde Point, thereby consigning two high conservation value

areas to an industrial future, instead of confining the impacts to one site if gas must be pursued. In addition the Labor Government has gifted Phillips \$20 million worth of infrastructure with new roads and pipelines out to Wickham Point to service the project. And yet the 'budget black hole' has meant no increase in environment funding.

Greenhouse gas emissions set to boom- The NT Government is supporting projects that will lead to a massive increase in the NT greenhouse gas emissions like oil and gas production, the Alcan and McArthur River mine expansions and increased landclearing. The Greenhouse Strategy does not yet contain any concrete plans to stabilise or reduce the NT's greenhouse gas emissions.

Darwin Harbour protection- While the Management Plan was being developed, Darwin Harbour continued to suffer death by 1000 cuts. Illegal clearing at Wickham Point, increases in sand-mining activity, further clearing of mangroves at Palmerston dump and Bayview Haven, and expansion of East Arm Port all undermined the NT Government's stated commitment to protecting Darwin Harbour.

Still no Environment Protection

Authority- The NT remains the only jurisdiction in Australia without an Environment Protection Authority. Meanwhile illegal clearing by Conoco-Phillips at Wickham Point, illegal clearing of Gouldian Finch habitat for the railway and illegal dumping of cyanide in the Tanami Desert killing hundreds of birds all go unsanctioned.

Kneejerk support for McArthur

River mine- The proposed McArthur River mine expansion would, if it proceeded, be one of the most environmentally damaging projects seen in northern Australia, with one river being dammed and another moved and then mined. We know that the NT Government is hungry for economic development, but destroying a river system for a mine that will remain open for just 15 years doesn't make sense economically, environmentally or any way you look at it. The NT

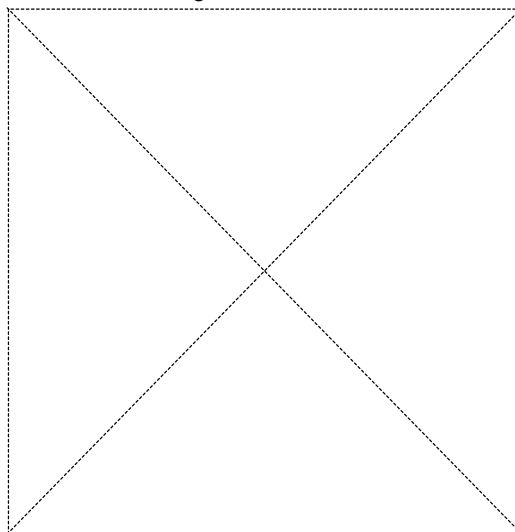
Government should not be supporting and talking up such a destructive proposal.

Growing shark-finning industry- ECNT has recently been advised by industry players that a growing shark-finning industry is operating out of Darwin. This is a major problem that needs immediate action. ECNT is following this issue up with the Commonwealth and NT Governments.

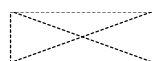
Aquaculture bonds- In ECNT's 2001 pre-election survey we asked all parties "In government will your party introduce a mandatory rehabilitation bond for all aquaculture and mining developments?" Labor answered 'Yes'. While there's been progress on mine rehabilitation bonds, aquaculture ventures are still able to begin in the NT without providing a bond. If one of these ventures goes broke or fails (as many aquaculture projects in the NT have done before them), the public will be footing the environmental and financial costs.

In summary there have been some positive initiatives, however by and large we believe the Labor Government has maintained a 'business as usual' approach to the detriment of the NT environment. We look forward to a much stronger environment showing in the second half of Labor's term in office.

-Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair
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Rubbish at Casuarina Beach. Not likely to change without CDL.



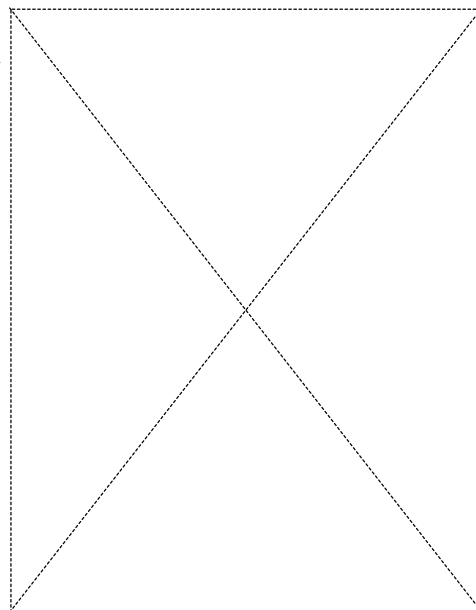
Greetings from the newest ECNT office inhabitant!

My name is Adele Pedder and as of early August I am eagerly working away on marine issues of the Northern Territory and surrounds. My work is undertaken on behalf of the Australian Marine Conservation Society, although a component of my work is under the direction of the Environment Centre. The Northern Marine Campaigner position is a newly created one and has emerged out a desire by conservation groups to increase our work on marine issues across northern Australia.

In the Northern Territory we are fortunate to have a relatively intact coastal and marine environment. However, threatening processes are currently occurring, and are on the increase. Coastal and marine ecosystems of the Northern Territory are of high conservation value, have strong Indigenous presence and provide important economic benefits to our society.

With human impacts increasing together with expanding pressure on ocean resources, now is the time to act and give true recognition to the worth of our oceans and ensure the protection they deserve.

A focal point of my work will be on Oceans Policy implementation ensuring marine conservation is at the forefront of the Northern Regional Marine Planning process. Other issues to be addressed in the Northern Marine Campaign include establishment of Marine Protected Areas, sustainable fisheries with a focus on the recent expansion of Shark Finning, appropriate aquaculture and conservation outcomes for Darwin Harbour. I can be contacted on 8941 7461 or via email: adelepedder@amcs.org.au



Will the Darwin Harbour Plan of Management deliver the goods? Have your say before September 31st.

The draft Darwin Harbour Regional Plan of Management was released on 21st August by John Bailey, chairperson of the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee, and is open for public comment until 30th September. Submissions will be considered by the committee and further amendments will be made to the Plan before it is submitted to the Minister. The Environment Centre NT has been actively involved throughout the construction of the Plan through our participation in the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee (DHAC).

The Plan in its current form does not contain strong conservation outcomes. The framework is sound, however at this stage there is no assurance that the Harbour's natural values will be protected, even if the Plan is implemented. The Environment Centre NT encourages members of the public to have their say on the future of Darwin Harbour. The following is a list of core components needed within the Plan in order for adequate conservation of Darwin Harbour's unique and valuable ecosystems and species:

- A clear process for and commitment to implementation and evaluation of the Plan

- Protection of remaining mangrove forests, in their entirety, within a National Park
- The establishment of a no-take protected area within the Harbour (ie: an identified sanctuary where no fishing is allowed)
- Protect all important habitats in the Harbour and its catchment including mangrove forests, wetlands, rainforest pockets, coral reefs and sea-grass with appropriate buffers.
- Limit impacts of activities in the catchment particularly land clearing, extractives and industrial use.
- Commitment to no water obstructions, weirs or dams in the Harbour
- Commitment to no further waterfront housing developments or canal estates.

Copies of the Plan are available at www.ipe.nt.gov.au or by telephoning (08) 8999 4473. Further information on Darwin Harbour can be found on ECNT's web site: <http://www.ecnt.org>

Comments and submissions can be sent to DHAC, c/o Goyder Centre, PO Box 30, Palmerston NT 0831, or email dhac@nt.gov.au on or before 30th September.

-Adele Pedder and Kirsten Blair

Bits and Pieces

ECNT's 20th Birthday!!!

We hope you all have this date marked prominently on your calendars. We are planning a great night, with a bit of a look back at some of our highlights from some past coordinators, and of course some celebrating of achievements.

Food by Café Kashmir will be available to buy and our surprise Birthday T shirts will be on sale to buy for \$22—adults and child sizes and a few different colours.

The Stocktons will be playing music from about 9pm so bring your dancing shoes too.

This will be a fantastic event, so if you have friends or relatives around bring them too!

The Daly River Needs You!!

We need your help to distribute 'SAVE THE DALY' postcards to the people of Darwin. Please contact Lizzie at the ECNT office or leave her a message on 8981 1984.

Another Daly Event

Come to the Deckchair Cinema on Tuesday 7 October to learn more about what is planned, bring a picnic (but no

alcohol please) see some slides of the Daly presented by Henry Boer and then enjoy the short film 'The Story of Rosy Dock' followed by WILDNESS the story of Tasmania's most famous nature photographers Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis and their quest to save the Lake Pedder and the Franklin River from the 1950's to the 1980's.

Very suitable for children! (see page 3 for more details.) Tickets \$12 & \$8 concession.

Shark finning on the increase in the Northern Territory

The status of the world's declining shark populations is of increasing public concern. No where is this concern more widespread than in Australia. Overfishing is killing our sharks, and shark finning, where it still occurs, is exacerbating the problem. A case in point is the Northern Territory Shark Fishery where shark finning and processing sharks at sea is still permitted. In recent months, NT Shark Finning activities have been on the increase and are operating in a way that is prohibited in most jurisdictions.

Recent NT shark finning activities have seen the larger shark species, previously incidental catch, now being targeted for their highly valuable fins. Long line fishing techniques used specifically to target the larger species for fins is replacing the nets previously used to catch smaller species. Processing (filleting) at sea is permitted in the NT therefore trunks are not returned to shore intact. These operational aspects of the Shark Finning activities make species identification extremely problematic and it becomes impossible to monitor impacts on shark populations, in turn raising questions of sustainability. Species identification is particularly important to monitor incidental catch of threatened and protected species.

The activities of the Northern Territory Shark Fishery, managed by the Territory Government, do not reflect the current International and National moves toward addressing management of shark fisheries. In recognition of increasing pressures on shark populations and the potential negative impacts Australia's Territory, State and Commonwealth Governments have developed the soon to be released National Shark Plan. Management of Shark Fisheries in Australia's waters is, in most part, the responsibility of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA). AFMA has recognised the wasteful nature and detrimental population impacts of Shark Finning and does not support the industry.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) and Environment Centre NT will be working to ensure that the Northern Territory Government puts a stop to unsustainable sharkfinning practices. The Northern Territory Government should adopt the *IPOA – Sharks* and the *Australian National Shark Plan* objectives—namely the conservation and management of sharks and their long-term sustainable use.

Adele Pedder
AMCS & ECNT



DATES TO KEEP in September and October

28 September: ECNT's 20th Birthday @ Brown's Mart, from 6pm

7 October: Daly night @ Deckchair Cinema "Wildness" from 6.30 –9 pm (bring a picnic but no alcohol –bar available)

31 October: National Celebrate Jabiluka Day, details tbc

The first truck returning uranium ore underground 12 August 2003. Photo GAC.

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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