

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT
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January/February 2004

Welcome to new Coordinator

Introducing your new campaigns coordinator: Peter Robertson

Hello Territorians. I commenced work as your new campaigns coordinator on the 19th of January. For the past 15 years I have been based in Perth working with the Wilderness Society, the Conservation Council of WA, and for the past ten years as Convenor of the Western Australian Forest Alliance which lead the successful campaign to end logging in WA's remaining old growth forests.

Having spent much of my 23 year activist career working on logging and mining issues it is fitting I suppose that two of the major issues I have dealt with since arriving in Darwin are logging and mining related, namely: the draft management plan for the logging of NT forests and woodlands, and the expansion of ALCAN's Gove alumina refinery.

The logging plan, released for public comment by the Parks and Wildlife section of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, is a real shocker – something out of the dark ages of natural resource management.

See the article in this newsletter for more information, and please consider writing a brief submission opposing these new guidelines, which are open for public comment until the end of February.

Having said that, there are of course many important issues facing the Environment Centre this year, ranging from the Daly and McCarthur river campaigns, to massive LNG-related developments and resultant increased greenhouse gas emissions, and a range of coastal

and marine issues. ECNT is also involved in the Cool Communities project looking at how to make our homes and towns more sustainable..

ECNT is engaged in a number of government processes and committees, including the Parks Masterplan process which is

reviewing the conservation reserve system across the whole Territory.

And finally, we are now gearing up for elections at both the Federal and Territory level and it is important that ECNT, and its partner organisations in the Northern Australia Environment Alliance, set clear environmental priorities for political parties looking for community support. One "ask" for Territory candidates will be wide ranging environmental law reform, including the establishment of an EPA for the Territory.

All in all its going to be a big year and I hope you will find the time to be a part of ECNT's efforts this year. Your feedback is always welcome.

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NEW STAFF STRUCTURE at ECNT

The Environment Centre has come a long way in the last twenty years. Through the Centre, some excellent campaigners have achieved some amazing wins and countless passionate people have been involved in one way or another.

We hope the Centre will continue to be the heart of environmental campaigning in the Top End and as a commitment to its continuing success, we plan to invest further in the organisation's infrastructure. This means a few changes and improvements to the way the Centre operates.

The ultimate purpose of the restructure is to ensure that ECNT remains an effective organisation long into the future. We aim to do that by creating realistic and sustainable roles for staff and by providing a functional and supportive working environment.

The most immediate changes are to assist our Campaign Coordinator to take campaigning to a higher level and to create the new role of Office Coordinator.

Both Campaign Coordinator and Office Coordinator roles are designed to complement each other and operate at a strategic level. This will allow both Coordinators to focus their skills in relevant areas of expertise and share overall management of ECNT.

I am very pleased to take on the responsibility of Office

Coordinator, a role which involves a wide range of tasks relating to the Environment Centre's organisational health. That includes everything from managing the day to day operations of the office to ensuring staff needs are catered for, to looking after our supporters and unearthing new revenue streams.

This is a challenging job which requires large amounts of ball-juggling as well as keeping on top of a thousand details. It also requires experience of project management and an ability to get things done.

A fundraising grant from Poola means I can now work one extra day per week for the next year to implement mid to long-term fundraising programs specifically for the Environment Centre. This money will also enable me to meet regularly with a team of expert fundraisers from across the country to develop some national fundraising strategies for the environment movement as a whole, as well as participate in fundraising training.

And all of this in four days a week!

For the past year I've been learning the ropes at ECNT and now have a good understanding of how the Centre operates and where our opportunities for improvement lie. As well as developing new skills I intend to call on the experience I gained internationally in my previous career as research director to ensure this new role makes the

necessary impact.

Some of the activities I have planned for the next few months include implementing a monthly-giving (direct debit) membership program, improving our office infrastructure, incorporating a fundraising section on our website and raising our income to support the Centre's needs.

I'm also looking forward to working again with members of the ECNT's Fundraising Sub-Committee to organise events and activities throughout the coming year.

If you think you can help with any of the above or would like to find out more about the Environment Centre's fundraising activities don't hesitate to call or email me on ecntadmin@octa4.net.au. I look forward to hearing from you.

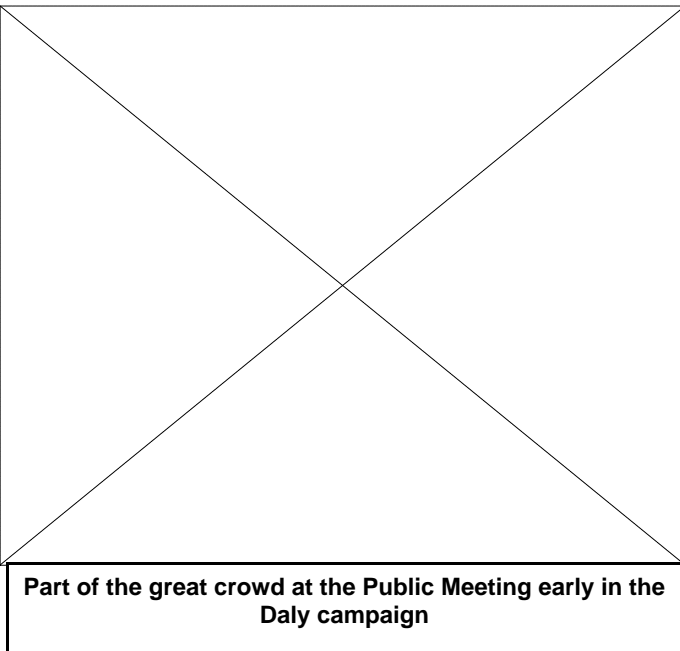
Gill Ainsworth
Office Coordinator

Daly river moratorium

a good step forward for the Daly

In November 2003, Clare Martin - Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, placed a moratorium on large scale treeclearing and agricultural subdivisions in the Daly Basin. This is a temporary win and creates breathing space for the Daly River campaign, and time for further research into the requirements of maintaining the significance of the region.

Whilst this declaration is a good step towards



protecting the environmental and cultural values of the Daly River, in order to ensure the long term protection of the Daly Basin, future land use planning

should be based on advice from Australia's best environmental scientists.

There are concerns, however, that the proposed expert advisory group set up to advise planning in the Daly Basin is dominated by NT Government officials.

We need to ensure any future plans do not allow the same blunders as the Murray - Darling where large scale treeclearing and irrigated agriculture has led to soil erosion, dropping water levels and loss of abundant native wildlife.

Independent, expert advice from Australia's best environmental scientists is essential if we are to plan an environmentally sustainable future for the Daly River region. The NT Government needs to secure the protection of the environmental and cultural values of the Daly for the long term viability of the region. Discussions held with Minister Burns have given us reason to hope this will indeed be the case.

Thank-you to all of you who helped out with the campaign so far, and to those who signed and sent a postcard or petition. Every contribution has helped the Daly flow fresh and free for at least another year or so. Special thanks to Henry Boer, Northern Woodlands Campaigner, for his expertise and dedication to this issue. May we let this win inspire our enthusiasm and commitment to the Daly.

Jacinda Brown.

We're having Ted Egan for lunch at ECNT!

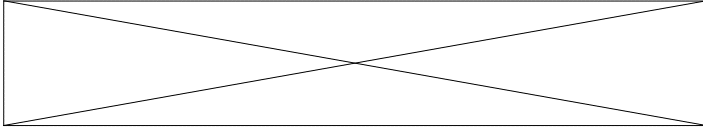
The Administrator of the NT, His Honour Mr Ted Egan and his partner Ms Nerys Evans have accepted the invitation of the Environment Centre to come to ECNT for lunch on Tuesday 23 March.

We are inviting ECNT members to join us for this lunch. If you plan to come, please bring "a plate" of food, and let us know in advance what you are bringing.

**The lunch is at 12.
Hope to see you there.**



Cool Communities Update



ROUND 1 wind-up

The Darwin and Palmerston Cool Community Round 1 finished on 31 Dec 2003, having audited 92 households. 43 of these households claimed the \$300 incentive/rebate for making greenhouse friendly changes to their homes, bringing more than \$10,000 of federal government money into the local economy.

300 copies (the whole print run) of 'Greenhouse Friendly Hardware for Top End Housing' have been distributed via Council offices and individual household interest. A new revised run will be printed, as part of Round 2 that starts later this month.

A social function 'Power to the People' was held on November 22 at which Cool Households spoke about changes they had made to their homes and lifestyles. There were some inspiring speeches, despite the rugby world cup final in the background!

Work with Darwin City Council, Palmerston City Council and the NT Government has been successful in involving them as Cool Communities partners for Round 2. Darwin and NT governments are contributing \$2,700 each to co-ordinating the project and Palmerston will make staff time available to support households in their council area. We hope this will lead to their ongoing involvement after June 2004.

Community leader Jo Kieboom said:

The project has increased community, local expert and government knowledge of the greenhouse savings potential of different household level initiatives. It has also proved the importance of benchmarking tools such as star rating systems (Cool Households often proudly quote their progress from one Cool Household Rating to another rather than mention actual kg saved).

The project has resulted in a highly valuable set of household emissions data, electricity use histories and detailed household greenhouse audits, including household emissions profiles, and has tested set of household greenhouse auditing tools including:

1. Top End Home Greenhouse Auditing Training

Course

2. Top End Home Greenhouse Audit Checklist
3. Top End Home Greenhouse Profile Spreadsheet
4. Top End Home Greenhouse Audit Report Template

By March 2004 we will have established a web-based system where households can record and monitor their Greenhouse Gas emissions. The project has also proven the importance of people meeting with like minded others and feeling like they are a part of a community-wide initiative, to maintain their enthusiasm for saving greenhouse gas emissions."



Cool communities ROUND 2 starts-up:

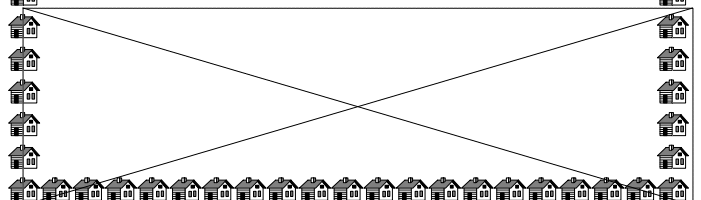
We are seeking up to 100 households who want to be audited and supported in taking energy saving actions during the first half of 2004. Cost is \$10, or free if you are low income/student/pensioner.

A one-hour home audit will give you many tips and ideas about energy saving, that are good for the environment and good for your wallet! After the audit, you can monitor your savings and record them (on paper, or via the internet) and earn points for every Kilowatt hour you save. These points can then be traded for greenhouse friendly items such as low energy light globes.

Anyone wanting to join Round 2 can contact Ian Lillington on 8981 2532, or email coolcdarwin@iinet.net.au

Please tell your friends, neighbours and colleagues. Look out for project launches in Darwin and Palmerston during February and March.

Ian Lillington



Casuarina Coastal Reserve pipeline construction an indication of future Gas Plant Operations?

Disastrous beginnings to Darwin's Gas Plant operations have shaken the Northern Territory community. Pipeline construction at Casuarina Coastal Reserve did not go to plan and the integrity of the area has been put at risk. For reasons unknown to the Environment Centre, Casuarina Coastal Reserve was the site chosen for the assembling of the pipeline which was then to be floated off the beach and towed out to sea.

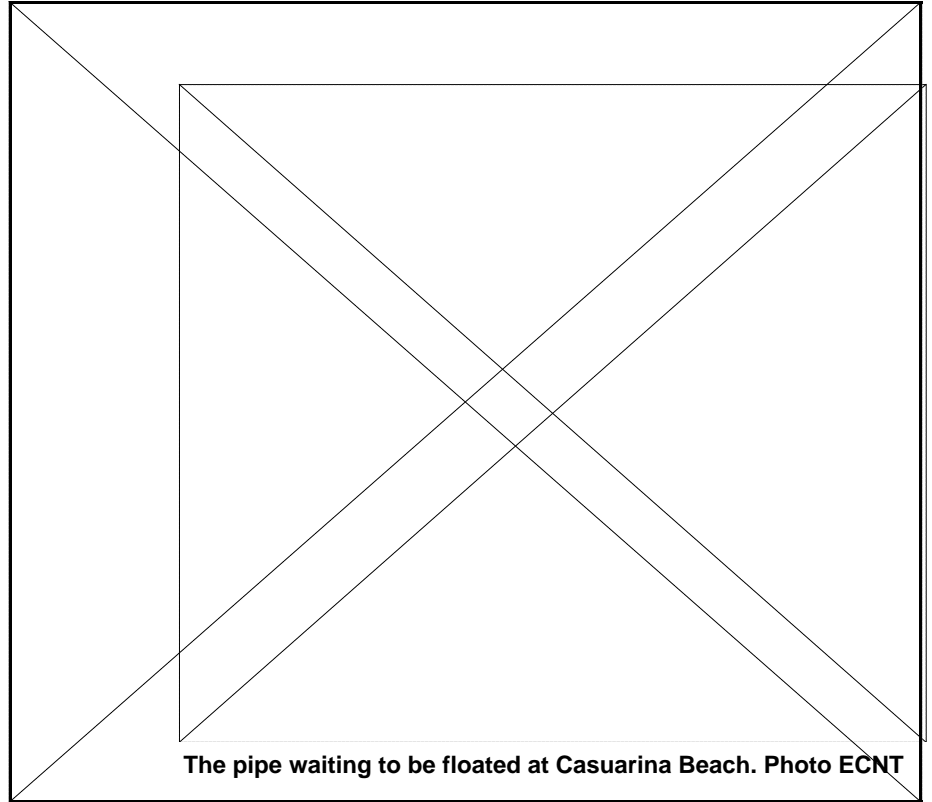
The Coastal Reserve resembled a construction site amidst unsuccessful attempts to get the 70 tonne, 380 metre pipeline under control and out to sea. Heavy machinery dug up the beach, people and vehicles trampled through the fragile dunes and a mooring cable broke – the whole operation was a big blunder.

The Coastal Reserve is the NT's most visited nature reserve and a turtle nesting beach. This reserve, and all NT Parks and Reserves, should be off limits to such damaging activities.

If what we have seen at Casuarina Coastal Reserve is an indication of what is to come in Gas Plant Operations, it is completely unacceptable. We need to ensure that future Gas

Plant development does not again pose such threats to the Northern Territory's precious coastal and marine environments.

Adele Pedder



The pipe waiting to be floated at Casuarina Beach. Photo ECNT

Call for clamp down on water use

The debate over Australia's water resources has taken another twist, with calls for product labelling to show how much water is consumed during the manufacturing process.

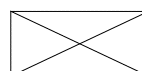
Professor Ronnie Harding from the Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of New South Wales says most people do not know that it takes more than 5,000 litres of water to produce a loaf of bread.

She says more water needs to go back into Australia's river system and there needs to be greater consumer awareness.

"We've already seen this happen in the energy sense when we've got star ratings on fridges, washing machines and so forth," she said.

"People are starting to be concerned about water in this country, so I can foresee a situation where we end up with products with water use rankings, and that concerned consumers will go for the products that are the most efficient users of water."

Professor Harding says it takes around 7,000 litres of water to produce a pair of jeans, and nearly 150,000 litres to produce a new car.



Landclearing by stealth?

Unbeknownst to most Territorians, the Parks and Wildlife section of Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment (DIPE) has released for public comment a draft management program to regulate the commercial logging of the Northern Territory's native forests and woodlands on public land (including pastoral lease land and unalienated Crown land).

According to DIPE, it is current government policy to allow, and even encourage, the sale of logs from our woodlands and forests. Commercial logging is already well underway on the Tiwi Islands, and under these new draft guidelines, similar logging could proceed elsewhere across the NT with minimal environmental safeguards.

Under the draft program, no upper limit is placed on the area over which logging can be approved, or the volume of logs that could be sold. Also, there is no requirement for public notification of applications to log; there is no opportunity for public comment on any proposed logging operation; and the proponent has no requirement to prepare a management plan setting out in detail how the logging will take place and how its impacts will be controlled.

DIPE says this program is based on an undated government policy document written approximately 8 years ago, which asserts that by allowing landholders to log their forests and woodlands there will be an increased incentive for them to conserve them!

Under the draft management program DIPE is proposing certain minimal restrictions on logging, e.g. minimal stream buffers. However, the draft restrictions, or conditions, are so weak and full of loopholes and lacking in scientific foundation that almost any form or intensity of logging could be approved. Even monsoon rainforests and mangroves would be approved for logging under this plan.

While the plan says logging must be "selective" only, no definition of what constitutes selective logging is provided. Elsewhere, the document admits that there are no studies of the impacts of logging on flora or fauna in northern Australia; that it is likely that some species will be adversely impacted by logging; and that, "Unfortunately, our knowledge of resource levels, growth rates and the impacts of logging on natural values is limited."

DIPE's ultimate defence of this deeply flawed program is that there is not likely to be any large-

scale commercial interest in the logging of NT woodlands and forests because there is probably not enough good quality resource of the main target species - Ironwood (*Erythrophleum chlorostachys*) and *Callitris intratropica* - to make it profitable.

However, logging companies and other developers have shown in the past that with enough government subsidies, even the most apparently ludicrous projects can turn a profit. At the moment the NT government charges a royalty of just \$8-\$10 "per stem" for logs sold from leasehold land – a price that does not cover basic public management costs. Loggers will be charged a whopping \$40 fee for the permit to log.

The end result is that landholders, working with commercial logging companies, could use this 'green light' for logging as a means to effectively clear large areas of land while pretending that they are not involved in landclearing.

Even if this absurd proposal generates little interest from leaseholders and loggers it has the potential to add to the serious problems already confronting many ecosystems and species in the NT.

Some other quotable quotes:

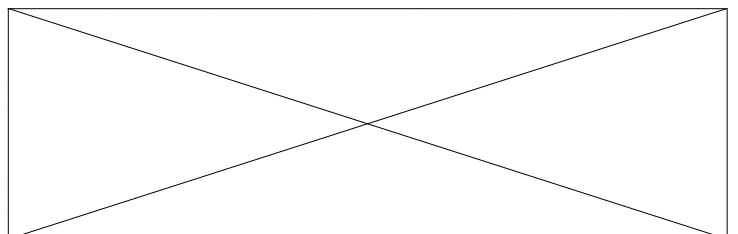
"Tree species that are classified as Near Threatened or are of high conservation significance will only have a permit issued for harvesting if there is a management agreement between the landholder and the Parks and Wildlife Service."

"Habitat trees (trees with hollows) will not be allowed to be taken unless five such trees remain per hectare."

"Increased duration of permits and waiving of royalties will be used as an inducement for landholders that carry out logging to enter into conservation management arrangements."

To view this deeply disturbing plan, go to www.nt.gov.au/timberplan

To make a submission, write to Dr Rob Taylor at Rob.Taylor@nt.gov.au



Bits and Pieces

New Printer & Fax Machine

ECNT now has a new network printer and fax machine thanks to a successful Community Benefit Fund grant application submitted last year. We would particularly like to thank Delia Lawrie, MLA for Karama and Chairperson of the

Year of the Built Environment – 2004

The Year of the Built Environment for the NT was launched by Claire Martin on 5 February, and ideas for ways that we can contribute to the Year are still welcome.

by a number of environmental groups and is planning to use the Year of the Built Environment to progress this idea. If you have any ideas, or links with developers and architects, please contact Ian or Peter at ECNT.

Call Ian on 8981 2532 or email coolcdarwin@iinet.net.au.

Recycle your toner and ink cartridges at ECNT!

We have recently installed a "Cartridges 4 Planet Ark" collection box for anyone who wants to make sure their printer, fax and photocopier toners are recycled properly.

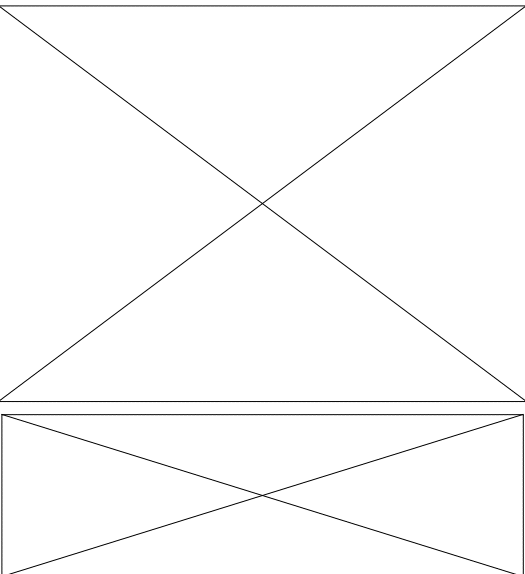
We can accept Brother, Canon, HP, Lexmark, Panasonic and Epson cartridges.

So now you can drop off while you drop in!

The ACF head office and Environment Victoria are based in the state of the art Green Building called "60L" in Carlton, Melbourne. Daylight and fresh air permeate this 4-storey building which combines energy and water efficiency and low allergy materials. It is a building that uses ordinary materials and clever design and also looks beautiful.

The compared with a standard office 60L reduces energy use by about 65% and mains water by 90%.

ECNT is beginning to investigate options for developing a green building in Darwin, that could be shared



Environment and Sustainable Development Committee for supporting our application and for visiting us last month to hand over the cheque in person.

Our new Kyocera FS 1010 Ecosys printer is an environmental award winner. Each component of the printer can be recycled including toner, making it an ideal addition, along with our new office table, to our environmental showcase office.

Big Thanks to Volunteers

An enthusiastic group of staff and volunteers spent several hours last week sorting out the office. The results are fantastic! Thanks to all.

Calling all emails!

Dear members and supporters,
We are currently updating our membership and newsletter contact email addresses.

Please email us on ecntadmin@octa4.net.au to:

1. confirm your **email address**;
2. let us know if you would like to receive our **newsletter** by email instead of mail
3. tell us if you would like to receive **environment related emails** from us

Many thanks!

For Your Calendar:

Tuesday 23 March midday: Lunch with Ted Egan at ECNT

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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