

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT (ECNT)
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October 2004

Special election issue: see pages 4/5

Global warming and nuclear power: the radioactive fantasy lives on

"In my view climate change is the most severe problem the world is facing today, more serious even than the threat of terrorism." Sir David King, Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government, January 2004.

Around the world there is a concerted push from the nuclear lobby and its supporters to promote nuclear power as the answer to global warming and climate change caused by burning fossil fuels for energy.

Is this sensible? Well, for a number of reasons, no!

Organisations as diverse as the Pentagon, Shell, the Insurance industry, National Farmers Federation and CSIRO have recently produced reports setting out in some detail how serious and urgent global warming is and the threat it poses to nearly every aspect of life on Earth, including ecosystems and biodiversity, the global economy and human health.

There is no doubt global warming is a massive problem and large reductions (at least 60%) to the world's greenhouse gas pollution levels are urgently needed. There is also no doubt that the fossil fuel-based energy sector is the main culprit in the continued growth of greenhouse gas pollution worldwide. In Australia between 1990 and 2002

there was a **30% increase** in greenhouse gas pollution coming from the energy sector, mostly coal-fired power stations, and official projections show that this could double by 2020 (CANA, 2004)! This figure shows just how misguided the current Federal government's fossil fuel-friendly policy on greenhouse and global warming is.

The nuclear 'solution'

If the nuclear power option were to be considered as a possible solution to global warming, its global capacity would need to dramatically increase, and an enormous number of new power plants would have to be built around the world. Currently, nuclear power plants account for about five percent of the global energy share. Doubling that share would require constructing approximately 1,320 new plants, including hundreds in developing countries. Taking into account the huge construction and operation costs (billions of dollars each), the eight to 12 years needed to build each plant, and the unsolved problem of finding safe radioactive waste storage sites, the feasibility of a dramatic increase in nuclear power is nonexistent. And of course the amount of uranium mining would have to increase massively.

Even this investment would not adequately address the problem of global warming, because 10 percent of the global energy share would not

significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To meet a larger energy share, and also replace coal-fired plants when they are retired, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions, about 2,000 nuclear power plants would have to be built in the next few decades. This solution is obviously **not** feasible for economic, logistical and environmental reasons.

The US Rocky Mountain Institute (www.rmi.org) has shown that you can save seven times as much carbon through electricity efficiencies as you can by investing in nuclear. And you kill no one and leave no legacy of hazardous wastes. There'd be plenty of change left over too for a research program to develop cheaper solar cells with which, in time, almost every

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building in Australia and around the world could be roofed!

There is no doubt that if we want a solution to global warming that can occur quickly, safely and with major economic benefits, renewable energy and energy efficiency are the answer, not the nuclear fantasy, or nightmare.

For more information on climate change see www.cana.net.au and also, for a laugh, <http://act.greenpeace.org/ecs/v2?i=K4ukF1191801>

Daly Campaign Update

It is getting close to crunch time for the Daly River catchment. The Daly Region Community Reference Group, which includes the Environment Centre NT, was due to deliver its draft report to the Chief Minister this month. That report has been delayed in its final editorial stages and now looks likely to be released for public consultation some time in November. The final decision on when it will be released lies with the NT Government.

ECNT is keeping the pressure on for an extended moratorium on landclearing in the Daly Region lasting for at least another three years. Of course our primary goal is still to see an end to broadscale landclearing in the NT. We are also seeking a new moratorium on water allocation licences in the Daly region.

A petition is therefore being circulated, which is included with this newsletter. Daly campaigners Lauren Flannery and myself, plus a number of fantastic volunteers, have been doing stalls around the various Darwin markets collecting signatures. Look out for the funny looking person in the pig-nose turtle costume.

But we also need your help. We need lots and lots of signatures to show the community won't stand for the destruction of the Daly. So please try to get as many as you can and send the form back to me at ECNT.

We have some great 'Save the Daly' bumper stickers available too. So please get in touch if you would like one.

Gary Scott
Freshwater
Campaigner
ph 8941-7439

A quoll in the Daly by Di Koser

Climate change hits NT

Where's the NT Greenhouse Strategy when we need it?

A new CSIRO study has found that climate change caused by greenhouse gas pollution will have major impacts on the Northern Territory.

CSIRO says the NT can expect increased temperatures, generally less rainfall, increased evaporation, and increased cyclonic intensity.

The combination of changed rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures and evaporation, leading to an overall drying of the landscape, has serious implications for the whole environment, including rivers and wetlands, as well as Indigenous communities and various industries including tourism, pastoralism and agriculture.

The CSIRO report says that an increase in hot days and hot spells is likely to increase fire risk, energy demand for air conditioning, and heat stress for humans, animals and crops.

Other likely impacts include increased algal blooms and increased risk of pests and diseases.

Q: So what is the NT doing about it? A: not much!

- Prior to the last election the ALP promised a greenhouse strategy for the NT which would address our increasing greenhouse gas pollution and the impacts of climate change. Three years later, we are still waiting!
- In the meantime, the NT government is strongly promoting a range of fossil fuel developments that will almost double the NT's annual greenhouse gas pollution output.
- One possible bright spot is the government's Parks and Conservation Masterplan. Under this plan there is proposed to be an increase in conservation reserves and more effort put into 'off-reserve management'. These two outcomes, if realised, could help more of our biodiversity survive the impacts of climate change.

The big picture

Environment groups across Australia are calling for concerted action by all governments:

- Committing to reducing greenhouse pollution by at least 60% by 2050;
- Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol;
- Establishing a cost on greenhouse pollution, either through a carbon tax and/or a greenhouse pollution emissions trading scheme;
- Increasing Australia's energy efficiency by setting a mandatory national target to reduce stationary (e.g. powerplants, factories etc) energy use. (Energy savings could deliver a \$1.8 billion benefit to Australia's economy, create about 9,000 jobs and cut greenhouse pollution by 9% over 12 years).
- Supporting the development of a stronger renewable energy industry through a Mandatory Renewable Energy Target of 10% by 2010 and 20% by 2020.
- Ending largescale treeclearing. Treeclearing is a major contributor to global greenhouse emissions.

Tackling climate change requires courage and foresight by political leaders and above are some key steps that need to be taken. **Our national interest needs both parties to commit to all of these steps.**

Australia's tropical sharks - dying for their fins

Its time to decide the future of our northern sharks

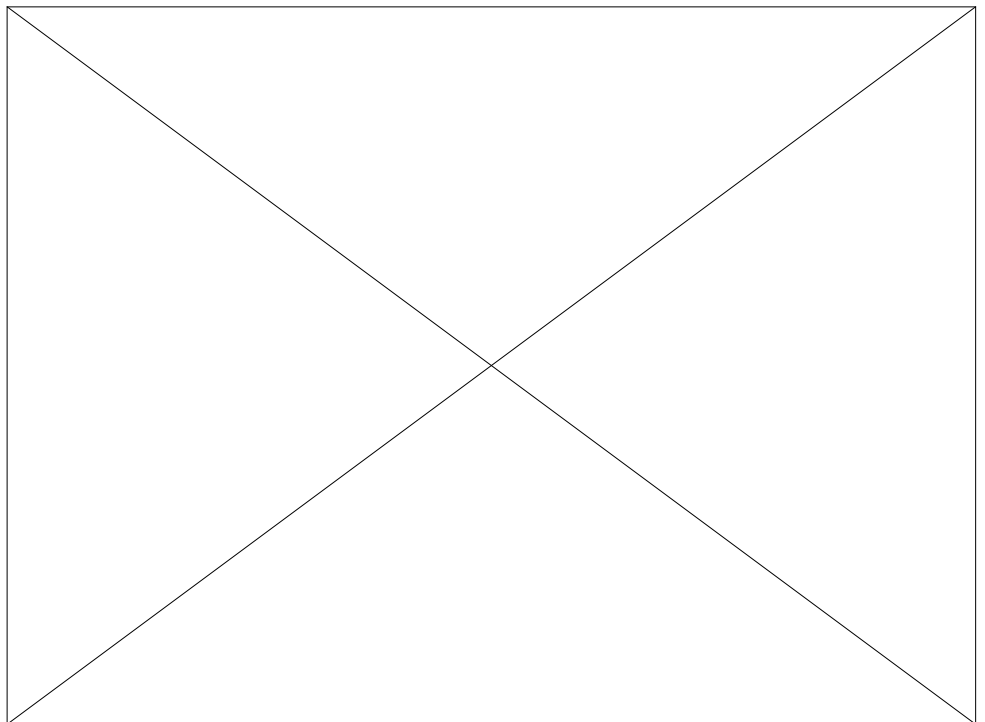
Northern Australia's tropical waters are home to a diverse array of sharks and rays. And now, they are under threat...

Right here in our backyard we are currently witnessing the widespread slaughter of large sharks (3-4 metres long) - just for their fins! Shark fins make up less than 2% of the whole animal and are a luxury product exported to rich Asian markets. The rest of the animal is considered worthless and high mercury levels in large sharks makes them unfit for human consumption.

Killing sharks for their fins is as senseless and unsustainable as killing elephants for their tusks or rhinoceros for their horns - tragic, wasteful and inhumane.

Australia's sharks lie at the top of marine food chains and help to ensure that marine ecosystems are balanced and healthy. Sharks are particularly vulnerable to overfishing. This is because they are more like whales and dolphins than other fish: sharks produce few young, live long and mature slowly. Our seas are home to over three hundred species of shark. Very few of these pose any threat to humans. Shark fishing must be stopped in northern Australia and more sustainable fisheries should be supported.

It is time we left our vulnerable tropical sharks in the ocean



Adele Pedder from the Australian Marine Conservation Society in Darwin with a shark fin cut from a 3.5 meter Tiger Shark or Hammerhead.

where they belong - with their fins attached!

adelepedder@amcs.org.au

THANK YOU'S

We are calling for an immediate ban on shark fishing in Northern Australia.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society is working with the Environment Centre of the Northern Territory to protect our tropical sharks. You can support our work by writing a short letter of support and/or by making a donation to the shark campaign.

Visit www.amcs.org.au and send your online letter of support now.

Public comment deadline: October 8th

For more information call 8941 7461 or email Adele at:

THANK YOU EARTHDANCE!

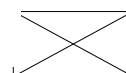
Special thanks to Pete, Jas, John, Crag, Matt, Simon and Sarah for hosting the best party in recent history and for **raising \$1,500 for ECNT**.

Big thanks also to Mark, Enni, Steph and Louise who helped on the door; and to all the DJs & VJs for providing the entertainment.

Thank you also to everyone who has signed up to our **Monthly Giving Program** so far, your generosity is inspirational!

If you'd like to be part of a powerful, effective fundraising program and put some spare money to very good use, then visit

<http://www.ecnt.org/MonthlyGiving.htm> for more info or call Gill on (08)



Vote for the e

Where the parties stand in A

The Darwin seat of **Solomon** is Australia's most marginal electorate in next weekend's Federal election.

Over the past few months the Environment Centre has attempted to ascertain what the main political parties and candidates for Solomon are offering for Australia's and the Territory's environment.

This is not always an easy task. The CLP failed to respond to our questionnaire, and failed to produce any environment policies for the NT.

Set out below is our best effort at explaining what the ALP, Greens, Democrats and CLP/Liberal Coalition are offering to YOU the voters of Solomon in this election.

We have not attempted to keep track of the policies of the other three candidates in Solomon.

The ECNT does not endorse any Party or candidate: the choice is yours!

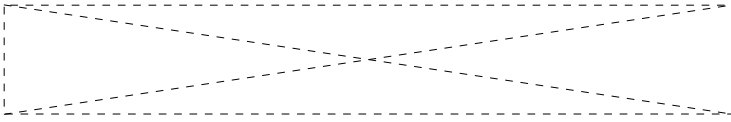
	CLP/Liberal Coalition David Tollner	Democrats Duncan Dean	Greens Ilana Eldridge	Labor (ALP) Jim Davidson
Global warming and greenhouse pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No target for greenhouse pollution reduction Oppose ratifying Kyoto protocol No greenhouse pollution tax or levy Renewable energy target of just 2% No mandatory target for increase in energy efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut greenhouse pollution by at least 20% by 2020 Will ratify Kyoto No greenhouse pollution tax or levy, but introduce emissions trading scheme Increase renewable energy target to 10% by 2010 No mandatory target for increase in energy efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut greenhouse pollution by 80% by 2050 Will ratify Kyoto Introduce a carbon tax or levy Increase renewable energy target to 10% by 2010 Achieve 30% improvement in energy efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No target set for reduction in greenhouse pollution Will ratify Kyoto No greenhouse pollution tax or levy, but introduce emissions trading scheme Increase renewable energy target to 5% by 2010 No target for energy efficiency
Daly River and other NT heritage rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy released on Daly or rivers generally No response to ECNT questionnaire Possibly some funds for Daly research and monitoring under National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and NHT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term moratorium on further landclearing and water allocations in Daly pending base-line ecological studies and preparation of a fifty year natural resource strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not support further largescale landclearing or water allocations in Daly Support three year moratorium on any new landclearing or water allocation approvals in Daly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not support further largescale landclearing or water allocations in Daly Support a cap on landclearing in Daly at "less than 2000 hectares/year" pending more research "Will work with NT government to protect NT heritage rivers"



environment!

Australia's most marginal seat

	CLP/Coalition David Tollner	Democrats Duncan Dean	Greens Ilana Eldridge	ALP Jim Davidson
Nuclear waste dump; Ranger uranium mine; Jabiluka proposed uranium mine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Howard Coalition has "officially ruled out" a national nuclear waste dump in the NT (and is looking offshore instead) No policy on Ranger or Jabiluka uranium mines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No national nuclear waste dump in NT Close Ranger mine Oppose Jabiluka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No national nuclear waste dump in NT Revoke Ranger operating licence (i.e. close the uranium mine) Oppose Jabiluka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No national nuclear waste dump in NT Ensure recommendations of Senate Inquiry into Ranger mine are implemented Oppose Jabiluka
Weeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy released No response to ECNT questionnaire Presumably Coalition if re-elected will continue to help fund weed control programs in NT 	Will support changes to NHT guidelines to prevent funds going to organisations or locations where weeds are being promoted for "pasture improvement"	Will support changes to NHT guidelines to prevent funds going to organisations or locations where weeds are being promoted for "pasture improvement"	Will support changes to NHT guidelines to prevent funds going to organisations or locations where weeds are being promoted for "pasture improvement"
Industrialisation/ Glyde Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy released No response to ECNT questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A highly consultative plan for NT industrialisation is needed, with Commonwealth involvement Support possible heritage listing of Glyde Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support review of gas-related industrialisation of NT to address concerns for places like Glyde Point and greenhouse pollution Support possible heritage listing of Glyde Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support review of gas-related industrialisation of NT to address concerns for places like Glyde Point and greenhouse pollution Support possible heritage listing of Glyde Point
Shark finning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy released No response to ECNT questionnaire 	Moratorium on shark fin fishing in NT pending more research on shark species and impacts of finning	Moratorium on shark fin fishing in NT pending more research on shark species and impacts of finning	Moratorium on shark fin fishing in NT pending more research on shark species and impacts of finning
Genetically modified organisms (GMO's) including cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy released No response to ECNT questionnaire 	No GMOs or cotton in NT	No GMOs or cotton in NT	No cotton, including GMO cotton in NT
Tiwi Islands forest clearing and exotic woodchip plantation establishment (Sylvatech project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy released No response to ECNT questionnaire 	Do not support proposed expansion but do support projects helping Indigenous self determination	Oppose proposed expansion of project	Conditional support for expansion; must have environmental approval and benefit Tiwi Islanders



COOLmob on the day went into the draw for a deluxe weather station. Congratulations to Libby Hanlin who was the lucky winner.

The National Cool Communities project ended on 27 August. However, the two NT projects, COOLmob and Desert Knowledge Australia Cool Community in Alice Springs are continuing. We have both received core funding for 3 years from the NT government. Work continues on finding funding for the national program and we'll keep you posted as to the outcome of this.

In the mean time, COOLmob is looking to the future and growing independently of the national Cool Communities project. We are looking forward to many innovative projects in the future, as well as continuing our core activity of providing home energy audits.

Excellent savings by COOLmob households

An independent, preliminary report conducted for all the Cool Communities across Australia has shown that Round 2 COOLmob households saved on average 1.62 tonnes of CO₂ and 8.72 GJ pa! This is an increase in savings from Round 1 households and also compares favourably to other Cool Communities. Well done to all Round 2 households who took part in the survey!

COOLmob Competition

COOLmob recently held a competition at our stall at Parap Markets on 28 August. All households who joined

Website and database

Despite a few hiccups, COOLmob's on-line emissions tracking and household management database is working. Most Round 1 households have been contacted about having their details put on the database so they can monitor their progress on line. If you are keen to participate, please contact me on the phone number or email address below. If you are already using the database please let me know of any problems you have so we can iron them out.

GreenBuys

We are also planning to have our GreenBuys program up and running over the next few months, so that households can be rewarded for their greenhouse friendly behaviour.

Home energy audits

Our household energy auditors are ready and waiting to do audits, so if you are looking for ways to help the environment around your home and save money on your power bills, call us or register on-line: www.coolmob.org

Thea Bray - COOLmob Project Manager
T: 8981 2532
coolcdarwin@iinet.net.au

Federal Government Funding for Environment Groups Must Continue!

The financial resourcing of environment groups is critical for Australia's economic, social and environmental well being. Federal government funding for vital programs which provide this support needs to be maintained and enhanced.

Federal government programs which provide core administrative, as well as other financial support have enabled community backing for, and action on, key environmental issues including:

- demonstrating the benefits of restoring and protecting Australia's river systems;
- action to address threats to Australia's biodiversity;
- action to address fisheries management to reverse the decline in some fish stocks;
- limits placed on urban sprawl and initiatives to enhance the use of public transport; and
- addressing the continuing growth in energy-related carbon dioxide emissions.

Through action in these areas, non-government conservation organisations are helping drive a government and community reform agenda. In particular, organisations like state conservation councils, national groups, and specific topic groups, play a vital role in assisting governments to make the necessary policy, regulatory and behavioural changes needed to improve our society.

The Federal Government's Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Program

(GVEHO) is the crucial 'door opener' performing an irreplaceable role in supporting the administration of conservation councils and other small environment organisations.

Such administrative funding has a significant impact on an organisation's ability to operate effectively and is difficult to source elsewhere.

Other federal government programs which directly allow environment organisations to catalyse effective and scientifically robust voluntary community environmental activity are Cool Communities and Marine and Coastal Community Network.

Environment organisations in Australia play a major role in our country's effective response to environmental issues. Programs like GVEHO, Cool Communities and Marine and Coastal Community Network should be enhanced.

Australian environmental groups are seeking an ongoing commitment from the federal government to these programs and the further expansion and development of them.

Please write to your local candidate asking them to support federal funding of environment groups.

This article contains extracts from an article written by Simon Divecha, CEO of the Conservation Council South Australia.



Pastoral Board shows its true colours

Alcoota Buffel Mania

The Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) in Alice Springs is currently investigating how it came about that a totally inappropriate development was allowed to take place on Alcoota pastoral lease earlier this year. This development, which was given the go-ahead by the Pastoral Land Board, involved the clearing of 23 square kilometres of native bushland (roughly the equivalent area to 1,900 football fields!) and the subsequent sowing of one of Australia's most threatening environmental weeds - **Buffel grass** *Cenchrus ciliaris* (Humphries *et al.*, 1991; Adair and Groves, 1998).

The main reason the development was allowed to proceed was on the grounds that it would reduce the threat of wildfire on the property. In fact, it is becoming increasingly acknowledged that Buffel grass actually increases the incidence (and intensity) of wildfire.

Most of the Mulga woodland on Alcoota Station hasn't been burnt for a long time and is considered to be among the best examples of this habitat type in southern NT. This vegetation type is poorly represented in reserves in the NT and is threatened by frequent hot fires. The Bushfires Council NT have confirmed that Buffel grass carries heavy fuel loads and produces hot fires that destroy trees and other vegetation (DLPE, 2000). Both scientific and intuitive knowledge suggest that sowing Buffel grass will produce greater risks of hotter and more frequent fires. This contradicts the applicant's stated intention to help control bushfires.

Concerns were raised by Parks and Wildlife regarding the proposal to plant Buffel grass and the likely impacts it would have on biodiversity in the area. This was due to proximity to three important botanical areas,

described as "**Sites of Botanical Significance**" (SOBS) in White *et al.* (2000). The invasion of Buffel grass into these sites would severely impact upon their biodiversity values. An assessment by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment (DIPE) described the presence of Buffel grass to be "rare", "largely absent" and "extremely rare" in the development areas. DIPE also asked for "consideration of the longer term implications of planting Buffel grass by the pastoralist" and recommended against the planting of the species in one area close to a SOBS site. These recommendations were largely ignored by the Board in their assessment of the application.

The Pastoral Land Board also failed to consider the opinion of the local traditional owners when addressing the development application, ignoring a Central Land Council submission that requested the proposal be rejected on the grounds that the development would be detrimental to the interests of the traditional Aboriginal owners.

The approval of this development shows the lack of commitment by the NT Government in addressing the negative environmental impacts that Buffel grass is having on biodiversity in the rangelands of southern NT. It also highlights a contradiction in the Federal and NT governments' commitment to fighting Buffel grass. At Uluru alone more than \$50,000 per year is spent on the control of Buffel grass whilst most Parks in the NT spend both time and resources on mapping and eradicating the weed.

ALEC has lodged a Freedom of Information claim on all documents submitted to the Pastoral Land Board during the application process and will keep you informed.

Article reprinted from ALEC newsletter

Bits and Pieces

ECNT Fundraising Film Night Deckchair Cinema Thursday 11 November from 6.30pm **The Corporation (PG)**

Based on Joel Balkan's book, 'The Corporation, the Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power', this is a timely, critical reminder that invites CEOs, whistle blowers, brokers, gurus, spies, players, pawns and pundits on a graphic and engaging quest to reveal the corporation's inner workings, curious history controversial impacts and possible futures.

Starring 7 CEOs, 3 Vice Presidents, 2 Whistleblowers, 1 Broker 1 Spy, with Michael Moore, Noan Chomsky, Naomi Klein and special guest star: The FBI's top consultant on psychopaths.

WINNER: Special Jury Award, Amsterdam Film Festival, Audience Award, Sundance Film Festival People's Choice, Calgary, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Thessalonika AND Toronto Film Festivals

Bring a picnic & some friends. Coffee & snacks available
Tickets: \$12, \$10 concession

DATES TO KEEP

**Milkwood School Open Day Saturday 16th October 10 – 2 pm 22 Bauhinia St Nightcliff
8985 3363** Information, food and fun for all.

"Better late than never news":

- **NT Government finally decides to prosecute Ranger uranium mine operator ERA;**
- **NT Government confirms current GM cotton trials near Katherine will end next year, despite Monsanto's attempt to extend them into 2006.**

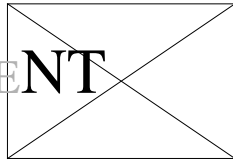
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The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT

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