



The Environment Centre NT  
- Since 1983

# What we need: The Top 8 essential environment actions for the NT - 07/08

**Major environmental problems are emerging and worsening across the NT, including:**

- Weeds, fire, and feral animals
- Pollution of groundwater, river and marine environments from industry, mines, farms and urban centres
- Over-use and poor management of freshwater resources
- Loss of habitat due to land clearing and over-grazing by cattle
- Inappropriate coastal development – urban and industrial
- Overfishing and lack of regulation of fishing
- Impacts of global warming/climate change

**However, the biggest problem our environment faces, and the one that is making all others worse, is the policy of complacency and low-prioritisation adopted by successive governments - NT and Federal. Here is what must be done to reverse this complacency and address the problems:**

## **1 Save our climate: cutting the NT's greenhouse gas explosion!**

**The NT's greenhouse emissions are predicted to double by 2010 – led by rapid growth in industrial emissions (Darwin LNG plant and Alcan Gove expansion), plus bushfires and land clearing. Much of the NT is going to be hard hit – especially Indigenous communities - if global warming reaches its most dangerous potential. Governments can and must do much more to reverse our emissions explosion:**

- 1.1 Legislate for mandatory emissions reductions (20% by 2020) and a carbon tax (\$30 per tonne of greenhouse gas pollution).
- 1.2 Stop encouraging large-scale, energy intensive industrialization, such as the proposed Glyde Point development north of Darwin.
- 1.3 Legislate to create an NT carbon fund whereby carbon tax income and carbon offset payments will go to Indigenous and non-Indigenous landholders across the NT for the certified protection, restoration and sustainable management of our globally significant carbon sink: the millions of hectares of savanna woodlands of northern Australia.
- 1.4 Use this fund to increase and extend successful Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers programs on a fee-for-service basis for looking after country.

## **2 Sustainable cities: We must plan, design and build better!**

**Darwin, Alice Springs and other towns have major sustainability and livability issues to address, including water and energy consumption, waste management, and transport. All around the world cities and towns are adopting new standards for urban planning, building design, energy efficiency, water conservation (recycling) and public transport. Whilst Alice Spring was recently awarded 'Solar City' status, there is much more to be done to transform our urban areas into livable and sustainable homes.**

- 2.1 Amend planning laws and processes and housing regulations to ensure that environmental, sustainability and affordability outcomes, including public transport, are given the highest priority.
- 2.2 Adopt a 'star rating system' for the NT – similar to models in other states - requiring that housing/apartment and office design and construction meet minimum (and high) standards of energy and water efficiency.
- 2.3 Mandate installation of solar hot water systems and high efficiency air conditioners on/in all homes/apartments and offices, combined with rapid rollout of smart meters and feed-in tariffs (i.e. households get paid more for selling solar energy into the grid).

## **3 Water alert!: Looking after our fresh water and river systems**

**The notion that the NT, or at least the Top End, has surplus water and hence we can use and waste as much as we want was never correct and with global warming is even less so. Major changes are needed if we are not to end up with depleted and degraded groundwater and river systems like southern Australia.**

- 3.1 Reform water management including: a requirement for all bores and pumps to be licensed and metered; amendment of Water Act to ensure ecologically-based water protection and allocation plans are developed

- for all high use areas incl. Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs; increased charges for water (above existing 70c per 1000 litres!); and maximum use by industry of recycled water.
- 3.2 Fulfill 2005 election promise to enact Living Rivers legislation to provide a high level of protection for the NT's tropical rivers including the Daly. Such legislation to ensure an end to large scale land clearing; a permanent ban on cotton and GM crops; and no dams or river diversions.
- 3.3 Maintain the moratorium on land clearing in the Daly until Living Rivers legislation is enacted.
- 3.4 Tighter regulation of pollution and contamination from farms, mines and urban areas.

## **4 Election promises and good governance: Government leadership needed!**

**During the 2005 election the Martin government made 25 promises for the environment. Most have not been implemented; they must be fulfilled. In addition, responsible governance requires greatly increased environment funding.**

- 4.1 Fulfill 2005 election promises including establishment of a strong independent statutory **Environment Protection Authority** for the NT based on "the best environmental protection legislation in Australia".
- 4.2 Increase funding for all aspects of environmental protection and ecologically sustainable management and development. Existing budget allocation of ~\$90m (3.5% of total NT budget) needs to double over next five years. Some of the increased funding to go to implementing the overdue NT Parks and Conservation Plan.

## **5 Valuing our wonderful marine and coastal assets**

**Pressure is building on the NT's marine and coastal environments – from fishing, urban and industrial projects (including oil and gas), and global warming. We need to address these issues:**

- 5.1 Protect our diverse marine and coastal environments by creating a system of marine protected areas (MPAs).
- 5.2 Withdraw the proposed highly destructive Glyde Point industrial development. An independent and expert strategic review of industrialization options should be conducted which establishes clear criteria for the siting of future industry.
- 5.3 Increase protection for Darwin's world-significant Harbour by giving a statutory basis to the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee and the Harbour Plan of Management.

## **6 The weeds menace**

**Over the past hundred years dozens of plant species have been deliberately introduced into the NT, mainly for cattle pasture, and have become major weed problems. Now they, together with introduced animals and frequent fires, are causing environmental degradation across the NT.**

- 6.1 Declare gamba and buffel grasses as weeds under the NT Weeds Management Act; halt the further sale and sowing of all known or potential weed species; and substantially increase funding to address invasive species across NT.

## **7 Tiwi forest destruction**

**About 25,000 hectares of native forest have been cleared for woodchip plantations on Melville Island over the past 7 years. There are plans for another 40,000 ha to be cleared, which would be an environmental, economic, and social disaster. There is a better future for the Tiwi Islands:**

- 7.1 Reject the expansion of Great Southern Plantation Ltd's Tiwi Island woodchip project.
- 7.2 Work with Tiwi to develop sustainable, high value industries based on the natural and cultural riches of the Islands. Traditional Owners should be funded to manage their forests as a major carbon sink. Existing acacia woodchip plantations should be converted back to native species for high value timber and cultural products, and biodiversity.

## **8 Nukes: dirty, dangerous, unaffordable, and unnecessary**

**Every aspect of the nuclear industry, from massive water use, to toxic mine tailings, to radioactive waste, to weapons proliferation, makes it unacceptable as an energy source.**

- 8.1 Do not approve new toxic uranium mines in the NT, e.g. at Batchelor (Compass Resources) or Alice Springs (Angela/Pamela), or the Commonwealth radioactive waste dump. Work with the Commonwealth to incorporate Jabiluka and Koongara into Kakadu National Park, and clean up the toxic Commonwealth Rum Jungle uranium mine that continues to pollute the Finniss River.

**Want to get INVOLVED?:** Call ECNT on (08) 8981 1984 or email: [coordinator@ecnt.org](mailto:coordinator@ecnt.org)

