

DEVILS ADVOCATE

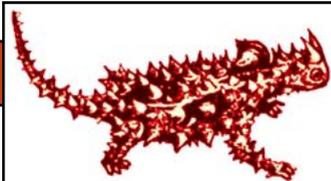
SPRING 2015



THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FROM THE



Healthy futures for arid lands and people
ARID LANDS ENVIRONMENT CENTRE
www.alec.org.au



The Arid Lands Environment Centre
90 Gap Road, Alice Springs
PO Box 2796 Alice Springs NT 0871
Ph: (08) 89522497 Fax: (08) 89532988
www.alec.org.au info@alec.org.au

The Devils Advocate is the quarterly newsletter of the Arid Lands Environment Centre. The deadline for submissions for the Summer Edition is Friday 23rd October. Articles, pictures, poetry welcome. Email communications@alec.org.au

All opinions expressed within Devils Advocate are those of the author alone, unless explicitly expressed.

The Devils Advocate is edited and designed by Nicole Pietsch, ALEC's Communications and Campaigns Officer. It has been printed by Colemans Creative and Print on 100% Recycled Paper.

The Arid Lands Environment Centre acknowledges and pays respects to the Central Arrente traditional owners, past, present, and future of this region.

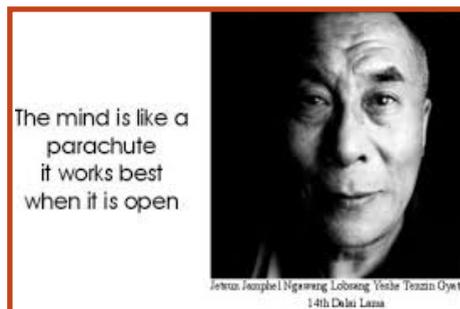
Cover images by Oliver Eclipse

CONTENTS:

- Director's Welcome
- Threatened Species
- ALEC Community Centre
- ALEC Solar
- NT Water Future Policy
- Arid Edge Environmental Services
- Alice Springs Community Garden
- Food for Alice
- Frackfree Coordinator Update
- Central Australian Frack Free Alliance
- Fracking Myth Busting
- EFSCAN
- Future of EcoFair
- Biodiversity Matters
- Beyond Nuclear Initiative
- Live and Learn
- Climate the White Elephant
- People's Climate March
- Desert Defender

G'day and welcome to the Spring edition of the Devil's Advocate. This is a great time to be in Central Australia. The evenings are cold and the mornings are crisp (sometimes frozen) but the days are bright, sunny and clear. The desert country stirs in the hearts of many people, and the icons of the Red Centre have become part of a pilgrimage, where people seek to connect with the heart of this country.

In June, the Dalai Lama visited Uluru. I was lucky enough to be able to see him speak. He spoke about the importance of nature and people's connection to it. He stated the need for indigenous people to maintain their cultural heritage while gaining the knowledge of a western education. He also spoke of the need to be compassionate and to care about the future now and to be conscious about every action that we take. This once in a lifetime opportunity to see the Dalai Lama gave me a massive sense of gratitude to be living in this part of the world.



We live in a very special place and it is important that we look after it and the people who live here. The unique characters, animals, plants, birds and

stunning landscapes tell the story of change. The adaptations to the highly variable climate, water scarcity and remoteness have been critical for the survival of communities of plants, animals and people since the first sunrise.

This year is the international year of soil and light. Both of these themes are highly important in the consideration of our future here in the arid lands. Soils are important for all life. Nutrient cycles through plants and bacteria support all living systems and primary industries including agriculture and horticulture. Beneath soils are minerals and fossil fuels that drive mining and petroleum companies to drill and explore for new sources of energy and wealth.

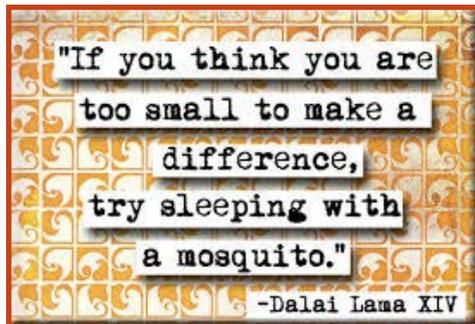
On the other side, light is energy. It illuminates, it guides, it shines from galaxies away, it warms us, powers our plants and life systems and now it does households, businesses, cars. This year's theme of EcoFair is soil and light and we can only hope that the structure of the soil has been prepared enough with our intention and the energy needed to cultivate resilient communities out here.

On the topic of change, despite the tough operating environment ALEC has moved to a safe location at 90 Gap Rd. Thanks to the generosity of a long-time ALEC supporter, ALEC is renting the place cheaper than market rent for the next 5 years at least. This new community centre will be an important part of ALEC's operations

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

with a sustainable living centre and community learning space being established.

With the winds of change upon us, it is important to recognise that the 2015 EcoFair will be the seventh consecutive event. This has largely been due to ALEC making sure the event is organised each year. Due to operational funding cuts and the resultant impacts on capacity ALEC is realising that the EcoFair is too big for ALEC to manage on its own. As a result, ALEC is opening up the EcoFair for wider participation in its organisation seeking applicants for a working group.



It's been a busy time in the policy space. The Federal Government White Paper on Developing Northern Australia was released in June. This policy generates numerous concerns for the environment, the biggest being a \$5 billion infrastructure fund which could be used to fund dams, ports, roads, railways and pipelines that may not be supported by the market, let alone environmental impact assessment.

The Northern Territory Government has also released a Discussion Paper title Our Water Future and seems committed to a conversation on water policy. It is ALEC's hope that some significant reform including the removal of exemptions for mining and petroleum activities from the Water Act and Waste Management Pollution Control Act.

In July, the Threatened Species Summit was held which has seen a 'war' on feral cats declared and emergency intervention called to save the Central Rock Rat, the critically endangered West MacDonnell Ranges resident, from extinction.

On a positive note, despite the Federal Government's consistent attacks on the renewable energy industry - the Alice Springs Town Council has committed \$1 million to be invested in solar energy this financial year. Given the rising costs of electricity this is a wise investment of rate-payers dollars.

Next month, Uterne 2 will be putting an extra 3.1MW (on top of the existing 1MW) of solar into the local grid. With Northern Territory Government investment into research and development of stand-alone solar generators and grid-connection harmonisation, central Australia could be a world leader in solar energy and associated technology. The economics of solar are improving every day. The pressure must continue on our leaders to prepare long term emission reduction targets that take include solar initiatives.

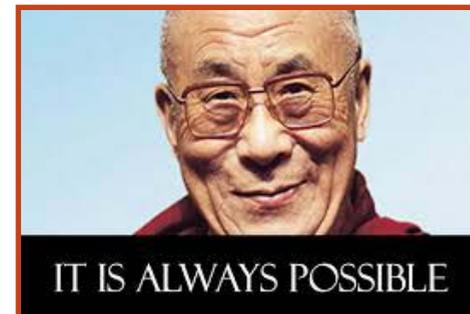
DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Finally, I want to say 'thank you' to all of the people who have helped ALEC to stay the course on the environmental and social issues impacting arid Australia. Without people turning up - there is no point organising an event; without generous donations - we cannot afford the rent; without supporters - we don't have any relevance. So please keep on turning up to our events; get your friends on board as Desert Defenders and keep on raising your voice for this special place.

We are all in this together and must support each other. If we are to succeed in moving towards a more ecologically and socially just world we will have to make it happen, not simply hope for it. We have to dig in and stand fast, NEVER GIVE UP. It is the darkest hour just before the dawn and when the Sun does come up....we want to make sure our rooftops are ready for it.

Thanks and enjoy the read.

Jimmy Cocking



Threatened Species

In mid-July the Threatened Species Summit was held in Melbourne where the Threatened species strategy was released. It listed the first 12 of 20 threatened mammal species that the government aims to bring back from the brink of extinction. The factsheet for the strategy is here. <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/332df2c1-61c1-4999-880b-02a6f674ad8e/files/factsheet-threatened-species-strategy-action-plan-20-mammals-2020.pdf>

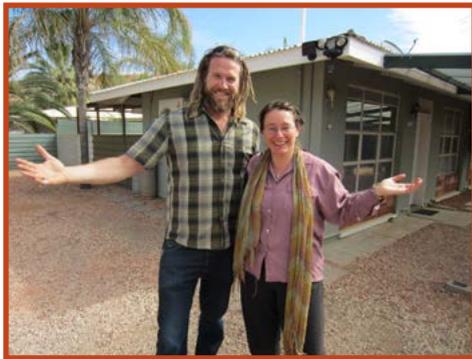
The Mala and the Bilby have been listed in the top 12 priority species for the policy. An emergency intervention has been called to save the Central Rock Rat, a resident of the West MacDonnell ranges to prevent its extinction at the jaws of feral cats.



ALEC COMMUNITY CENTRE

Just in case you haven't heard, ALEC has moved to the Gap. Thanks to the amazing generosity of an ALEC member and long-time supporter, ALEC is paying less than market rent on a property that was purchased for ALEC to establish a community centre and provide a space for the organisation to work from. 90 Gap Rd to be precise, opposite Pigglys Supermarket, on the corner of Kraegen St.

The possibilities are immense for this property as a showcase of sustainability with solar power, water tanks, native gardens and fruit trees, water efficiency, natural building products and promoting recycling while providing a space for community gatherings, workshops, events with printing and wifi by donation.



We have already started on the path. We are working with local film-makers to kick start a crowdfunding campaign to provide matched funds for potential government grants.

Arid Edge Environmental Services is putting together a plan for the

realisation of this desertSMART Living CeNTre or similar name.

ALEC will be establishing an ALEC Community Centre Committee made up of ALEC staff, Board, interested community members and volunteers.

If this sounds like you - please send an email to director@alec.org.au before August 31 for more details.

The community centre is currently open Monday - Friday 9am-5pm, with every second Wednesday evening from 5.30pm it is open for soup and a community discussion.

If you want to get involved or drop in for a visit - email info@alec.org.au or call 08 8952 2497. We are a busy bunch and not always at our desks - so please understand if the gates are closed.

We look forward to sharing this new chapter in the Arid Lands Environment Centre's life with you and hope that you can find the time, energy or money to support the establishment of a community hub in Alice Springs.

Jimmy Cocking



ALICE SPRINGS SOLAR

Alice Springs is a sunny place, it averages 330 days of sunshine each year. With this consistent and reliable solar resource and Northern Territory residents currently receiving the most generous feed-in tariffs in Australia (1:1), it's a wonder that solar panels aren't on everyone's rooftop. Is it the cost of panels? People renting? Or lack of options? What is driving people to get solar panels and what is preventing others from doing so?

ALEC is asking Alice Springs residents these questions and more in an effort to strengthen and grow the local solar industry <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALECsolarsurvey>.

At the same time, ALEC is working with the local solar suppliers to better understand the market and help prepare and plan for future challenges.

By the time of you reading this article, 4MW of solar generated electricity will likely be produced from the Uterne Solar Power Station owned by Epuron built by Sunpower Australia. There is a great little Youtube video here in anticipation of its opening <http://youtu.be/LpYkflnlcZA>



NT Water Future Policy

The Northern Territory Government released a discussion paper called Our Water Future in June.

<http://www.lrm.nt.gov.au/water/water/our-water-future/NT-Water-Strategic-Plan-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

ALEC made a submission to the NT Government related to this paper. ALEC's submission focused on the fact that both mining and petroleum activities are still exempted from the Water Act and Waste Management and Pollution Control Act. This means that pollution impacts and water monitoring impacts are not as stringent for these most at risk industries. Other issues that ALEC had was the focus on the economic development of the water resources rather than the environmental and social requirements for water.

Developing the North

In June, the Australian Government released its white paper into Developing the North of Australia. It is a long-term policy document that outlines this government's approach to developing the economic potential of Australia's north. However, there are some serious short-comings on the paper including the scope of industries explored and the lack of any real consideration of the impact of climate change in the region.

<http://northernaustralia.infrastructure.gov.au/white-paper/>



Who We Are

Arid Edge Environmental Services provides research, training, project management, design and consulting services in the areas of water, waste, food, and energy. Based in arid central Australia, we specialize in techniques and design solutions appropriate to communities, institutions, businesses and households living and working more sustainably in the arid zone and dry tropics.



Our Services

Project management, design and evaluation in the areas of environmental sustainability, sustainable livelihoods, behavior change programs, climate change adaptation and sustainable horticulture.

Community development and consultation services, specializing in participatory approaches to group facilitation and community consultation, particularly in cross cultural settings.

Energy, water and waste efficiency consulting for businesses, schools, community groups and homes, including auditing, cost benefit analysis, advice and project management of retrofits.

Commercial composting consulting services for small, medium and large enterprises, including advice, training, systems development and small equipment hire.

Nationally VET accredited training (Horticulture and Conservation Land Management)

Non-accredited training courses (short and long training packages) tailored to client needs in the following areas:

- Permaculture and horticulture
- Residential and commercial scale composting
- Waste efficiency and recycling
- Water efficiency and irrigation
- Energy efficiency

Landscaping and design services for homes, businesses and schools, specializing in water efficient landscapes and species selection, and drought tolerant food producing gardens appropriate to the arid zone and dry tropics.



Our Vision

Arid Edge Environmental Services is a trading name of the Arid Lands Environment Centre Pty. Ltd. and shares its vision of "healthy futures for arid lands and people".



Our Work

Arid Edge provides consulting services both nationally across the arid zone and dry tropics of Australia and internationally.

Our clients include government bodies, utility companies, Indigenous Corporations, private and public schools, not for profit organisations and businesses.

We have provided project management and consulting services to Indigenous Corporations, overseen landscape construction works in remote and urban locations, undertaken long term planning for community horticulture enterprises and provided supervision for RJCP projects in various regions in central Australia.

Our Values

Arid Edge works through a social enterprise model that engages partners on a commercial level as well as through a strong community development framework, and seeks where appropriate to use market based approaches and profit motive as an engine for positive environmental and social outcomes.

Contact us

Phone: +61 8 8953 8835
 Email: info@aridedge.com.au
 Web: www.aridedge.com.au
 Post: PO Box 2796
 Alice Springs, NT, 0871
 Office: 90 Gap Road,
 Alice Springs, NT, 0870.

ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY GARDEN

There's lot's of gardening activity at the Community Gardens with more than 35 plots flourishing with winter greens. All plots are full until December 2015, however if you want to go on the waiting list please email plots@alicecommunitygarden.org.au to register your interest.

The regular working bees have seen mulberries moved, mulch spreading across the garden, general clearing up and the appearance of power poles into Frances Smith Park, which will see electricity and the Solar Pergola soon arrive which is a joint funded project developed by ALEC with funding from Environment Protection Authority NT and the Bendigo Bank being contributed.

Working bees are on the first and third Sunday mornings from 9am. There is water and hot drinks available and sometimes even cake.

The Solar Pergola is a project to bring electricity onto the site. It also involves a shade structure that will house up to 4.5kW of solar panels to contribute to the town's renewable energy base while also reducing the cost of electricity for the garden. Having power will allow us to have electrically timed irrigation systems and host evening events requiring sound and light. This is an exciting step in the Garden's development.

In between working bees, there has been some bobcat work recently to form the base of the wheelchair

accessible paths and improve drainage to reduce the risk of erosion.

This will enable us to complete this grant funded project from the Alice Springs Town Council Community Development Grant.



The Garden will also feature on the Sustainable Science Trail (www.sustainablesciencetrail.com.au) in the next month when the signage will be placed on the site. The site will enable participants to use their smart phones to learn more about growing food in the desert. A garden bed is being built to be a living and changing site that will encourage people to observe the changes. It will be interesting to see how gardening and science tourism go together. Connecting with school groups, we think it will do quite well.

There is some bad news ... the old ironwood in the garden will have to be removed due to its complete infection with borer grubs. In the interests of safety, the Committee has asked Council to remove it. The firewood will be used at coming events.

In July we had two special guests to the garden, Author and Older Australian of the Year - Jackie French and Young Territorian of the Year Chantal Ober visited the gardens in mid-July. Garden Convenor Bruce Simmons, Deputy Convenor Jimmy Cocking and Food for Alice Coordinator, Carmel Vandermolen shared afternoon tea and a garden tour with the guests and their entourage.

ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY GARDEN

In August we welcome back gardening guru and EcoFair Ambassador, Costa Georgiadis to the Community Garden. He will be running a workshop in conjunction with local gardening identities on the science of soil and composting.

We are looking forward to the pilot Work for the Dole scheme being run at the Gardens by Arid Edge Environmental Services. The building of garden beds and earth bag building combined with planting out and maintaining the gardens will provide participants with horticulture and gardening skills. It will be good to get some of the big jobs that we as volunteers on the weekend never really get around to doing.

You can always join us on Facebook to keep up to date with the community garden and all it's



goings on <https://www.facebook.com/AliceCommunityGarden>

Come down to the gardens on a Sunday* morning for a cup of tea at a working bee. Wear closed toe shoes and be ready to get your hands dirty.

*First and third Sundays are the working bee days. Second, fourth and fifth are for bush walking and our own backyards.

Silent Meditation in the Garden



Sunday mornings
7.30 am until 8.15 am

Please join us at the Bodhi Tree in the north west corner of the Community Garden
All traditions welcome

BYO groundsheet and cushion(s)
A water bottle is a good idea in the heat
Donations of firewood in the cold weather welcomed

A gold coin donation towards Garden expenses appreciated

If you are not a member of the Community Garden please wait outside the gate until a member arrives to provide access

Any enquires phone Kay 89 52 8515

FOOD FOR ALICE

Food for Alice is getting bigger and better with each market. It is very common for customers to make Food for Alice their first stop every fortnight to grab local fresh produce. The biggest barrier we are coming up against for both our customers and suppliers is remembering which weekend the market is on. The good news about this problem is that we can potentially solve this rather easily. We are looking at having the market stall every Saturday.

There is a great amount of produce coming though from two amazing food producing gardens. The produce from the Community Garden and the top up that we get from small producers who have excess that they just cannot use. We think this will be enough to have a good supply every week. At the same time we know that our regular customers will come every week, and it will become easier to know when the markets are on.

We also think that this will also go a long way to making the market sustainable. At the moment the income is enough to pay for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time needed for someone to run the market. While costs will go up, income will also

go up and we will have less waste.

Each market we have new customers and each market is getting more and more local fresh produce out into the community. And of course we are able to offer produce that is not normally sold in the supermarkets. Things like Asian greens such as sword leaf spinach and pack choy. Citrus such as lemonade's and mellow yellow tangelos. And other parts of vegetables that I never knew you could eat such as beetroot and sweet potato leaves, and broccoli flowers.

So watch this space in the future, for now we are still every fortnight, and sometime in the future we will be weekly. Until then keep eating local.

A big thankyou to our regular volunteers who assist on Saturday mornings.

For more information, to volunteer or sell produce contact coordinator Carmel Vandermolen - business@alec.org.au



FOOD FOR ALICE

Food for Alice

Local produce market stall

9am-12pm @ Eastside Pilates

Every alternative Sunday to the Todd Mall Markets



Food for Alice is a local food distribution project and local food movement advocate. We are a social enterprise which brings people together in order to create choices as to where our food comes from, help reduce our food miles and invest in local growers and gardeners.

Support local, ethical food. Sell your excess produce, become a market volunteer, buy locally grown food!

Contact Carmel to sell your excess produce or to become a regular volunteer
business@alec.org.au 0409180614



The NT is NOT a sacrificial zone!!

The debate around opening up the NT for shale gas extraction has really been hotting up these past few months with growing community opposition to the industry in the face of increasing federal government support for using the Territory as a sacrificial zone for gas extraction.

The Federal Government White Paper on Developing Northern Australia released in June promotes the development of new gas resources as a high priority facilitating opening up the Northern Territory to fracking. The release of the White Paper was followed by a statement from Gary Gray, Federal Shadow Minister for Resources supporting fracking for shale gas in the NT as an opportunity to “generate new long-term jobs in remote and regional communities, create new businesses, improve regional infrastructure and generate increased royalties for the Territory Government”.

The NT government has been continuing to pave the way for the unconventional gas industry with moves to improve the regulatory framework for the industry, as recommended by the Hawke Report on the Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing February. Consultation around draft ‘guiding principles’ for hydraulic fracturing was held March through May.

The push for the North East Gas Interconnector pipeline also continues with \$5 billion in concessional infrastructure loans announced as part of the Federal Government’s 2015-16 Budget likely to support the project. Four companies have now been shortlisted for the project with the winning proponent expected to be announced in September. The pipeline will connect the Territory to the east coast gas network, opening avenues for fracked gas from the Territory to be exported overseas, and essentially suring up the viability of the development of the unconventional gas industry in the NT.

This reckless drive for an expansion of the damaging industry blindly ignores the risk to our water, land, and the public health of many regional and remote communities and is despite the fact that basic regulatory and legal protections are absent to prevent damage to our communities, water catchment areas and even national parks and reserves!!



Frackfree Coordinator Tanya Hall in action

But across the Territory we are gaining traction in the fight!!

In early June residents of Adelaide River near Litchfield became the first Territory town to go Gasfield Free! The result was an overwhelmingly positive response from residents with 96.5% voting to protect land, water and futures from invasive fracking and shale gas mining. The ‘gasfields free communities’ strategy is a unique community democracy process that enables local people to survey their communities in a systematic way and if a majority is obtained, declare their community ‘gasfield free’.

While the declaration doesn’t carry any legal standing it is a sign of solidarity within the community against the unconventional gas industry — and the State Government, should they want to explore or frack gas wells in the district.

This is the third local community to oppose gas mining following Wagait



Shire Council and Katherine Council in February passing motions to oppose fracking.

While Alice Springs Council failed to support a moratorium on fracking when a motion was put up in April, locally support for the campaign and the voice against fracking is growing stronger.

Overall fracking is becoming an unavoidable issue with increasing media coverage and community pressure on politicians to put forward their position. Ultimately fracking it will be a key election issue and candidates will need to listen to the views of their electorates when polling time comes.

Email Tanya Hall at frackfreecoordinator@gmail.com

The Central Australian Frack Free Alliance campaign continues to build with some great events to raise awareness of the issue of fracking over the last few months.

CAFFA members have been keeping a constant presence at the fortnightly Todd Mall markets and we had a great time at the Alice Springs Show in early July. It was great to see the extent of awareness of, and support for the campaign in the community!

At the end of July CAFFA hosted a hugely successful screening of the award winning Frackman film – with none other than the ‘Frackman’ Dayne Pratsky himself!

Over 100 people attended to see the film which shows the shocking treatment of landholders by the unconventional gas industry in Queensland.

CAFFA is working as part of the broader NT Frack Free Alliance, an umbrella group for communities resisting the expansion of the unconventional gas industry in the NT. The NT Frack Free Alliance consists



of groups from Katherine, Adelaide River and across the top end. Together we have been creating resources to help spread the word about the risks of fracking – check out the Don't Frack the Territory website (www.dontfracktheterritory.org) to view a range of short films on the issue as well as a range of other resources.

In September the NT Frack Free Alliance is holding a March on Parliament to send a strong message that we won't accept the unconventional gas industry threatening our water, wellbeing and way of life. CAFFA will be sending a delegation with a message from the Alice Springs Community.

For more information contact Tanya email frackfreecoordinator@gmail.com



A new loop of the Knitting Nanna's starts in Alice Springs!

June saw the launch of the Alice Springs 'loop' of the 'Knitting Nanna's Against Gas' with a presence at the Alice Springs Beanie Festival on the 20 & 21 July, followed by a two-hour 'knit-in' at Chief Minister Adam Giles office the following week.

The Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG) was established in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales in June 2012, as a peaceful and productive way for grandmothers in the area to show their concern and raise awareness about exploration for unconventional gas mining in the area. KNAG is affiliated with the national Lock the Gate Alliance and has now become a national phenomenon with over 26 groups nation-wide and the numbers continually growing.

The Alice Springs Knitting Nanna's have formed to protest against shale gas exploration in Central Australia.

The KNAG group have called on Adam Giles to show responsible leadership and implement a moratorium on the issuing of licenses for shale gas exploration and the use of hydraulic fracturing in the Territory. They are committed to continue their regular knit in's until he does and since June the Nanna's have since maintained a strong presence at Chief Minister Adam Giles office and have made a number of appearances at community events including the Alice Springs Show.

The group is always recruiting new members – and you don't even need to be a nanna or know how to knit!

To get involved or follow their adventures email: knagasp@gmail.com Or see their facebook page: *Knitting Nanna's Against Gas Alice Springs*



DON'T FRACK THE TERRITORY

THE TERRITORY IS BAILING UP ON FRACKING

OUR LAND IS OUR LIFE

NOT FOR SALE - NOT FOR SACRIFICE

On September 15 communities, landholders, farmers and pastoralists are bailing up on greedy gas companies and reckless governments promoting fracking for oil and gas that threatens our land, water, health and way of life. Join us or send a delegation to NT Parliament with a strong gasfield free message from your community or homeland.

We march together on foot and horseback
10am SEPTEMBER 15 from Civic Park to NT Parliament.

Camping and horse facilities available at Adelaide River Showground.
A gathering to discuss building the campaign against fracking in the NT will meet at the ARSS Club from 7pm on 14 September.

Contact Lauren on 0413 534 125 or at frackfreet@gmail.com for more information on how to send a gasfield free statement or delegation from your community or station.

BUSTING THE FRACKING MYTHS

Both the gas industry and the NT Government are keen to champion the supposed benefits of the industry in creating jobs and bolstering the economy. However one only has to look to the experience of communities in the frontline of the unconventional gas invasion to see any benefits in this regard are limited and short lived.

In communities in Queensland the gas industry's promises for job creation have turned out to be greatly exaggerated. In the Surat Basin, with the 4 year construction phase of the CSG gas fields now winding up, the gas 'boom-towns' of Dalby, Roma and Chinchilla are reporting extensive job losses a subsequently a crippling economic down turn.

Almost all the much touted gas industry jobs are for the construction phase only. Ongoing local employment opportunities are minimal with the majority of skilled workers fly-in-fly-out.

The potential economic benefits are also grossly exaggerated given the 'boom and bust' nature of the industry.

Again, looking to the experience of Queensland's Darling Downs, where the unconventional gas industry is most advanced in Australia, research shows that any economic benefits are limited largely to the industry itself.

Other sectors suffer negative economic impacts due to the loss of skilled staff to the industry and the increased cost of labour, rent, transport and goods and

services.

So while the industry employs some people, and some businesses profit by servicing the mining industry, overall it is a small, short term employer that drives up costs for local businesses and the community.

Offset this with the significant costs in establishing the industry and it is more a picture of economic drain than economic gain.

Further, the risk to other established industries such as pastoral, fishing, tourism and land and natural resource management should rule out development of NT shale gas reserves.

Tanya Hall



Education for Sustainability Central Australian Network

The EcoScience Schools Day is designed to enable local Centralian students to get a hands on experience in Science. While Science and sustainability is still highly regarded in the National Curriculum, with the budget cuts both national and locally there has been a slow decline in the resources available to schools for students to experience and learn about Science. At the same time a number of people and organisations noticed that schools also did not have the capacity or know who to contact locally to help them educate students in these areas.

These organisation established the Education for Sustainability – Central Australian Network (EFSCAN) to gives schools that avenue to included local science and industry's and link this back to the class room. It is this group that started the EcoFair Science Schools day, a day where school students can interact with local and interstate science industries and gain a hands on experience.

Each year both local and interstate organisations have participated in the day, giving a wide variety of science topics for the students to explore.

This has enabled between 120 to 150 students to gain a hands on experience in a number of different Science areas. Topics have ranged from animal welfare, engineering, health, food production, sustainability and climate change and adaptation.

This year features returning presenters Engineers without Borders, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, and The National Rural Health Students' Network. Live and learn will be connecting live with the Maldives. And local organisations Land for Wildlife and Parks and Wildlife will be supporting the event as they have done so since the start of the ECOFAIR Science Schools Day. This year we also welcome a new workshop looking at Ant Ecology with Dr Kirsti Abbott.

The success of the event can be seen by how quickly the workshops get booked out by schools. At the time of writing the day is 95% booked out, with a number of schools having booked in for the 4th or 5th year in a row. It does give us all great joy to be able to make a day like this available to the young people of Alice Springs.

Carmel Vandermolen



The Future of the EcoFair

The desertSMART EcoFair's roots are in a partnership with the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. Originally the Sustainability and Desert Garden Fair had been organised in partnership with Desert Knowledge Australia COOLmob as part of the Alice Desert Festival program.

The EcoFair started as an idea between Robbie Henderson (Live and Learn) and I when he was working for Desert Knowledge Australia COOLmob, which developed further in partnership with Olive Pink Botanic Gardens under the leadership of Ben Convery. The idea was to organise a sustainable living and desert innovation festival.

Showcasing local adaptation and inventions, solar power, water efficiency and sharing ideas, while promoting nature conservation and providing a safe space for inter-cultural exchanges of traditional knowledge and the sharing of technological understanding.

Participate, Learn and Create was decided as the motto. An opportunity arose for a \$10 000 grant from Power and Water and a successful application started the one-day desertSMART EcoFair.

Growing partnerships with the likes of Desert Knowledge Australia, Batchelor Institute, Centre for Appropriate Technology combined with the advent



of Alice Solar City, Alice Water Smart, the Alice Springs Community Garden provided enough support for then named, desertSMART COOLmob and ALEC to organise the EcoFair in partnership with Olive Pink Botanic Gardens.

The EcoFair grew into a multi-day event with the successful application to a National Science Week grant round through the Australian Government's Inspiring Australian Initiative.

Although unsuccessful at the multi-year round, the EcoFair secured \$20 000 to bring guest speakers to the event. Since 2012, the EcoFair has hosted Dr. Karl Kruszelnicki, Tanya Ha, Rod Quantock, Dr. Veena Sahajwalla, Costa



Georgiadis and Adam Spencer among other participating speakers who have taken the stage at the EcoFair.

Since finding the right weekend for it (as close to National Science Week in August as possible, without clashing with everything else happening in Alice Springs), the EcoFair has grown into a much loved event. It has hosted dozens of workshops, hundreds of stalls and several thousand patrons over the past seven years.

The EcoFair has catalysed a TedX Alice Springs, the First Regional Food Forum, EcoScience School's Day, EcoInvention competition, the LearnSpace Futures Forum and been an inspiration for other events communicating science and sustainability across Australia. Over time, the EcoFair has become a much-loved festival for all who have attended and it is hoped that it will continue for many years yet.

However, much has changed since back then, when Alice Solar City was gearing up, desertSMART COOLmob

had secure (secure) operational funding, ALEC had secure (3 years) of operational funding and the prospect of an Alice Water Smart program was growing. There were also specific government policies on reducing greenhouse emissions and understanding and preparing for regional climate change impacts, with opportunities for Environment Grant funding for the EcoFair, not just a part of it.

However, times have changed and Alice Solar City and Alice Water Smart have come and gone. Many partner organisations no longer have the capacity to participate like they once did. desertSMART COOLmob is no longer with us and the opportunities for science, innovation or environmental funding are very limited, not to mention financial support to actually put the event on.

ALEC is very thankful to the sponsors Power Water Corporation and Doubletree Hilton who have supported the EcoFair since its inception. ALEC also acknowledges and thanks Colemans Printing, Home Timber and Hardware, Ogden Power, Sadadeen Party Hire, Spinifex Valley and others who have supported the event materially through sponsorship and material in-kind support.

ALEC also wants to thank ABC783 for the broadcast support for the event and ALEC staff for stepping outside of the bounds of their work to enable this event to happen.



However, a time has come where ALEC can no longer carry the EcoFair on its own. It has grown to be too much work ALEC to organise by itself, especially with cuts to funding reducing available staff hours.

Anyone who knows event organising knows that it is heavily time consuming, high pressure at many times and each aspect requires planning, preparation including managing volunteers and then producing the actual event.

The EcoFair has become a complex multi-faceted, multi-dimensional event that brings entertainment, engagement and education to the community through the lens of sustainability and science communication. It is a rare gem of an event, but it is coming at a growing cost to the organisation that produces it.

We know the EcoFair has the potential to be a major event for Alice Springs that supports a vibrant and resilient community, but we need help to do it.

Are you up for it?

ALEC is accepting Expressions of Interest from organisations, government agencies and individuals who want to participate in an EcoFair Working Group.

We're looking for people who love the EcoFair and want to see it thrive. Interested people will need the capacity to meet monthly from late September

to coordinate, curate and support the production of the event. This will also involve looking for sponsorship and funding; establishing and growing partnerships; organising stalls and workshops; coordinating volunteers and developing an inspiring and innovative program.

ALEC staff will be able to support the event in 2016 but not able to drive it as has been done up until now.

If this sounds like you but you want to know more...email director@alec.org.au.

Expressions of interest close September 4th.

Please include your Curriculum Vitae and a cover letter as to why you want to be involved and what you can offer the event.

I look forward to working with you.

Jimmy Cocking





**BIODIVERSITY
MATTERS**

**Volunteer
Conservation
Program**

**4pm Saturday 15th August
Walk: Eucalyptus Intertexta Forest**

With the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

The dolomite/limestone foothills in front of the Heavitree quartzite range provide the source of the mineral/nutrient enriched soil that can support the Forest and its diverse and healthy understorey. The area has been looked after by volunteers over several years and most of the Buffel and other invasive weeds have been removed, making it a very special place to wander and observe the natural habitat.

Participants will meet at 4pm at the Claypans turn off, Ilparpa Rd. Please RSVP to business@alec.org.au by Wednesday 12th August. Bring hats and sun protective clothing, sunscreen, sturdy footwear, and water bottles.



www.biodiversitymatters.org.au



**BIODIVERSITY
MATTERS**

**Volunteer
Conservation
Program**

**8.30am Saturday 23rd August
Working Bee: Buffel and Cactus Busting**

With Alice Springs Landcare

Join members of Alice Springs Landcare finding and removing cactus and removing buffel from around the bases of Ironwoods and other native vegetation in a well used area of vacant land on the fringe of Alice Springs. BBQ lunch to follow in the play area on Gosse St.

Participants will meet 8.30am Cavanagh Crs. Cross the drain and pass two houses on the left then look for the Landcare Banner. Cost: Free. RSVP to business@alec.org.au by Wednesday 19th August. Bring hats and sun protective clothing, sunscreen, sturdy footwear, and water bottles. Please bring a salad.



www.biodiversitymatters.org.au

Muckaty - one year on

Friday June 19th marked one year since the Muckaty radioactive waste dump proposal was defeated!

The decision to abandon the plan came half way through a federal court case by Traditional Owners who were challenging the nomination of the Muckaty site, put forward by the Northern Land Council in May 2007. The federal court had heard evidence in Melbourne and Tennant Creek and was due to travel to Darwin the following week.

Community members are still elated and recovering from the many years of travelling, campaigning and worrying about the proposal. The campaign opposing the radioactive dump proposal persisted over eight years and outlasted numerous Federal Resources Ministers, NT Chief Ministers and Northern Land Council CEOs.

One year on, there is a mixture of pride, relief and concern. The determination and resilience of the community prevailed, but sadly, some elders who were strongly opposed to the nuclear dump passed away before hearing that the land had been protected. Traditional Owners are also concerned their success means another community may be unwillingly targeted.

Muckaty Traditional Owners and supporters are now monitoring the current site selection process. Until the

shortlisted sites are announced (expected early August) we cannot confirm whether any land in the Northern Territory was nominated.



ERA announces Ranger 3 Deeps project is canned

On Friday June 12 Energy Resources of Australia, operator of the controversial Ranger uranium mine, announced plans to cancel its contested underground expansion proposal – Ranger 3 Deeps.

Uranium mining inside Kakadu never made environmental sense, but the announcement to shelve Ranger 3 Deeps is a welcome and long-overdue announcement that it also no longer makes economic sense.

Mirarr Traditional Owners released a statement supporting full rehabilitation of the site and restating their fundamental opposition to the development of the Jabiluka uranium deposit inside Kakadu, also held by ERA.

Stay in touch with the nuclear free campaign! Subscribe to the Beyond Nuclear Initiative website for blog updates and campaign information. Facebook: Beyond Nuclear Initiative Twitter: @Beyondnuclearoz

ALEC is really pleased to welcome back Live & Learn International - a not for profit environmental organisation, whom have recently re-established an office within ALEC as a tenant. Live & Learn were previously housed with ALEC between 2009 and 2012, during which time they assisted to implement DesertSMART COOLmob and to design the residential component of the Alice Water Smart program. Live & Learn is managed locally by Robbie Henderson who is also a long term ALEC member and supporter.

Live & Learn has grown rapidly over the past decade and now works in 11 countries, with a strong focus on Asia and the Pacific Islands. Robbie's work is focused on supporting climate change mitigation projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing deforestation. This involves assisting indigenous landowners to establish conservation areas on their customary land and to access finance for land management and community development through the private sector.

We are looking forward to future opportunities to collaborate with Live & Learn. Robbie is already teaming up with Alex from Arid Edge (ALECs consultancy arm) to implement a project associated with savanna fire management on Aboriginal land in the Top End. Live & Learn will also be running a session at the desertSMART Ecofair schools day to link Alice Springs students via Skype with Live & Learn Maldives to discuss the impacts of climate change in one of the worlds



most vulnerable countries.

If you're interested in Live & Learn's work check out the website www.livelearn.org or the Nakau Programme via Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nakau-Programme/422181647964614> or www.nakau.org to find out about innovative ways of financing forest conservation and emissions reduction through 'payments for ecosystem services.'

Robbie Henderson
Co-director
Nakau Programme
Live & Learn International
+61 (0)437683929
www.nakau.org

Feral Cat Update

Check out these recent articles:

<http://theconversation.com/feral-feast-cats-kill-hundreds-of-australian-animals-35555>

<http://theconversation.com/the-war-on-feral-cats-will-need-many-different-weapons-44979>



Climate: the elephant in the room for developing northern Australia

Steve Turton

Professor of Environmental Geography at James Cook University

This article is reprinted from <http://theconversation.com/climate-the-elephant-in-the-room-for-developing-northern-australia-43528>

The recently released white paper on developing northern Australia ignores an elephant in the room: climate change. While the paper sees a bright future for the north (roads, rail, dams and food), without considering climate change we can't be sure the north will even be liveable.

The white paper also fails to take into account other environmental constraints such as water and soils. On Friday morning Prime Minister Tony Abbott, together with his deputy Warren Truss, Trade Minister Andrew Robb and Federal Leichhardt MP Warren Entsch, spoke passionately to a packed breakfast in Cairns about his government's vision for Northern Australia, with Abbott describing the white paper as a landmark report for the north. He promised the audience that the far-reaching report would be actioned and will not sit "mouldering on a shelf in Canberra".

Other commentators have described the white paper as a game-changer for northern Australia requiring our urgent and immediate action.

Yet the rhetoric behind the development of the north is not new. Since federation the "northern Australia agenda" seems to have been popularised by Australian governments at least every 20 years or so - but with little measurable impact or influence.

Why should it be any different this time? Can the region become the food bowl for Australia and neighbouring Asia as proposed in the report? What about the environmental constraints?

Ignoring basic science

The white paper has not referenced high-quality expert advice prepared by the Northern Australian Land and Water Task Force.

The task force report elaborates a great deal about the environmental limitations for broad acre agriculture and cropping across the north, citing poor and easily damaged soils, highly seasonal and erratic rainfall and complex surface and groundwater hydrology, as major constraints for many areas of the north.

The task force found about 5-14% of northern Australian soils could be used for agriculture. They also state that "factors not considered in their assessment (such as flooding, water availability and nutrient availability) may make agricultural use of the soils

unprofitable, practically unfavourable or even impossible". Large-scale cropping in northern Australia will require special and expensive management.

The white paper ignores reference to sophisticated climate change projections for northern Australia developed by our own CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology. Climate projections for the north this century paint a dire future and bring into question the feasibility and affordability of many of the development policies and plans outlined in the white paper.

A new, climate-changed world

The key messages for northern Australia from the Climate Change in Australia report are there is very high confidence that average temperatures will continue to rise in all seasons, and more hot days and warm spells are projected also with very high confidence.

Unlike southern Australia, changes to rainfall in the north are possible but unclear, but it is very likely the intensity of extreme rainfall events will increase. In coastal areas it is very likely mean sea level will continue to rise and height of extreme sea level events will also increase. Finally it is somewhat likely that the north may expect fewer but more intense tropical cyclones in the future.

These climate projections are the most comprehensive ever released for Australia and should be taken seriously into any policies and planning for the

future of northern Australia.

They raise critical questions for the economic, social and environmental integrity and viability of the north. Can we maintain sustainable cropping, grazing and tourism under such profound climate changes? How will changes in climate affect essential ecosystem services and biodiversity across the north? How will increasing heat impact on human communities?

Under a high emission scenario Darwin may expect over 230 days a year above 35C by 2090. In fact, there is no currently existing place on Earth that represents what Darwin's climate might look like in 2090. How can you plan for a future with no contemporary comparison? What can we do about it?

Adaptation to climate change across Northern Australia must engage all of society, including governments, industry sectors, communities and individuals.

If we are to build "pathways" to climate adaptation across northern Australia we need to position our natural resource management sectors, regions and human communities so that they are informed and ready to change if and when the need arises.

This will require local and Indigenous knowledge and tools to build the necessary environmental, social and institutional capacity to adapt to a changing climate and to inform government policy and planning.

Sunday November 29th

Global People's Climate March

"The UN climate summit in Paris this December will be the biggest global climate summit this decade.

On 29 November, the day before world leaders converge in Paris, people will come together again in the streets for the global People's Climate March – to break last year's record for the largest climate change mobilisation in history.

In thousands of cities and towns across the planet, we'll gather or march for our communities and those already at risk from climate change, for the future of our children and grandchildren, and for a safer world powered by clean energy.

We'll show politicians that this is a movement that is here to stay and growing fast. And we'll inspire others to join this 'open source' movement with no gatekeepers, no permissions needed – everyone is invited, not just to participate, but to organise and to lead.

Because for the climate revolution to change everything, we need everyone."

Ricken Patel is founding president and executive director of Avaaz, the world's largest global civic movement with 42 million members online.



Alice Springs Working Group Needed!

Let's make join together and make this the biggest rally Alice Springs has seen.

We need members for a working group to start meeting at the end of August to facilitate all sectors of the community being able to participate in this global day of action.

Email communications@alec.org.au to register your interest.

The time is now!

Make a difference



Become a Desert Defender

For 35 years the Arid Lands Environment Centre has worked for the conservation of the outback. We now rely entirely on community support to keep our doors open. Donate at www.alec.org.au

Become an ALEC 100 member:

Donate \$100 a month for a year, or contribute a one off \$1000 tax deductible donation. ALEC 100 supporters will assist to provide the ongoing essential operational funds of ALEC
https://www.egive.org.au/website/index.php?var=direct_donation

Become a Desert Defender:

Desert Defenders give monthly or one off donations that will provide critical funds to support ALEC programs and campaigns.
<http://alec.org.au/get-involved/donate-become-a-desert-defender.html>

Make an Electronic Transfer

Account Name: ALEC Inc - Gift Fund
 Bank: Alice Springs - Bendigo Bank
 BSB: 633 000
 Account #: 1343 58688

Join or renew your ALEC membership

<http://alec.org.au/get-involved/online-membership.html>
 Unsure if you are a current member - email communications@alec.org.au

For more information: 89522497 info@alec.org.au

**THE ARID LANDS ENVIRONMENT CENTRE (ALEC)
IS A COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENT
ORGANISATION, COMMITTED TO THE ARID LANDS
FOR MORE THAN 35 YEARS**



STANDING UP FOR DESERT COUNTRY

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY ACTION