

# DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



## SUMMER 2017/18

A FREE PUBLICATION FROM  
*Healthy futures for arid lands and people*  
**ARID LANDS ENVIRONMENT CENTRE**  
[www.alec.org.au](http://www.alec.org.au)



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The Devils Advocate is the quarterly newsletter of the Arid Lands Environment Centre.  
**The deadline for submissions for the next Autumn edition is Friday 16th February 2018**  
Articles, pictures, poetry, letters, welcome.  
[Email communications@alec.org.au](mailto:communications@alec.org.au)

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

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Back cover image by Petal

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

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**Arid  
Lands  
Environment  
Centre**

# ALEC DIRECTORS' WELCOME

G'day folks and welcome to this summer's edition of the Devil's Advocate. In this edition we reflect on the year that was. The challenges, the opportunities, the disappointments and the achievements of the ALEC team this year. We will also delve into the latest from the frontline of local and global climate action.

In this 38th year of the Arid Lands Environment Centre, it is important to reflect on the importance of the for-purpose/charitable sector and the impact it has had on protecting the environment and ensuring a more equitable society. ALEC has had a profound impact on environmental policy in the Northern Territory and growing environmental consciousness in Alice Springs and central Australia.

We have done this through working proactively with all levels of government, the business community and engaging the local community on a full range of issues related to the protection, restoration and connection to nature. ALEC will continue to stand up for the protection of the desert country and work towards a healthy future for the arid lands and its people.

The Federal Government, in response to lobbying by the Mineral Council Australia and other lobby groups, is currently pursuing the curtailing of environmental advocacy and the banning of international donations to Australian charities. This directly impacts on ALEC's ability to do its work as some of our most important outcomes have been due to ALEC's persistent policy advocacy. The proposed restriction of donations from international sources will impact on organisations like The Nature Conservancy and Pew Charitable Trusts, both of which have provided critical funding for the development and growth of the Ten Deserts Initiative.

It is critical that the Australian community stands

up to the bullying of the charity sector by the Federal Government on behalf of international corporate interests. Make your voice heard on the [www.standupforourcharities.org.au](http://www.standupforourcharities.org.au) website.



This year, thanks to our supporters we have been able to continue our important work in protecting nature. It's a consistent challenge for us to maintain the momentum but the dedicated team at ALEC is committed to catalysing change and building consensus towards the protection of the environment.

Everyone needs clean water, fresh air, open spaces, healthy communities and a connection to nature. ALEC will keep on standing up for renewables and opposing fracking and coal gasification developments in the arid lands. We will continue respectfully and diligently for a brighter and better future. We have some major challenges ahead, but together we can make the required change on the local and regional level.

Take action today....join ALEC and lend your name to the growing list of Desert Defenders at [https://aridlands.nationbuilder.com/desert\\_defenders](https://aridlands.nationbuilder.com/desert_defenders)

I wish you and your family a safe and refreshing festive season. I look forward to working with you in 2018.

**Jimmy Cocking**  
**ALEC Director**

**'To change everything we need everyone'**  
Naomi Klein



## 2017: Looking forward, looking back

In moving forwards, we often need to look back and reflect on the things we've seen, done and what we might've done if there would have been a next time.

ALEC started 2017 on the warpath against the Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline. The project was nearing approval, the Barkly had had a 1:50 year rainfall in January and the Wakaya people were opposed to it. However, the tables turned in February with the approval of the project and the Wakaya people signed an agreement for the development of the pipeline.

Without the support of the Traditional Owners, it became too difficult for ALEC to mount a campaign. ALEC maintains its opposition to the pipeline but does not currently have the resources to mount a campaign against it. ALEC will continue to advocate for a ban on fracking and work towards a fossil-fuel free future.

As a result of the return of NT Government funding, we employed two new part time staff – Alex Read as ALEC Policy Officer and Laurie May as ALEC Community Engagement Officer. These roles have built our capacity to comment and engage in government policy and reach a wider audience through getting more people engaged in the activities of ALEC.

Alex has brought a passion for environmental law and policy to ALEC. This has enabled us to be a lot more involved in government consultation processes and mining EIS processes. Alex has written submissions on a range of projects and has taken up the ALEC seat around a number of committee tables.

Laurie May has brought energy and enthusiasm into volunteer coordination, workshop organisation and events. These activities have brought more people into ALEC and is inspiring

people to take more action to protect the environment.

On the climate front, emissions intensity continues to rise on the national and international level. The Turnbull government has completely dropped the climate ball and has actively attacked renewable energy with the new National Energy Guarantee. The NEG limits the amount of large solar that can be installed without the equivalent of installed storage and enforces minimums for dispatchable electricity including coal and gas.

In the Northern Territory, the NT Government has committed to a 50% renewable energy target by 2030 and recently released the Roadmap to Renewables. This document is a good start but a lot of work needs to be done and ALEC is calling for the development of a fast implementation plan.

On the local front, the installation of 10 new gas engines is nearing completion at Owen Springs PowerStation. This decision by the Giles Government in 2016 led to the creation of the Repower Alice Springs group. Repower Alice Springs has grown into a powerful community lobby for 100% renewable energy by 2030. Repower has conducted a community survey of more than 800 people and is working towards the establishment of a community energy project.

Also, on the renewable energy front – Territory Generation is installing a 5MW battery into the Alice Springs grid. With the recent installation of the 100MW Tesla battery in South Australia, this will be the second largest battery in the southern hemisphere.

In the local government arena – Alice Springs was one of the first cities and towns to sign up to the Climate Council's City Power Partnership

and is in the process of installing 500kW of solar power and developing a Climate Action Plan. ALEC had 7kW installed this year with 4kW on the roof of 90 Gap Rd and another 3kW at the community garden.

The Alice Springs Community Garden continued to thrive this year under the steady yet active hand of Bruce Simmons. This year Kim McKay moved to Alice Springs and almost immediately became an active contributor. Kim has been a regular to the garden, fixing irrigation, removing problem trees and taking custodianship of the bushfood and bush medicine garden.

The Work for the Dole program has expanded the raised beds, constructed a shelter near the pizza oven and made the garden look ever increasingly beautiful. In 2017, we finished construction and launched the Solar Pergola which enabled the connection of solar and electricity to the garden. We also received a \$63 000 grant to build a kitchen, access toilet and office space at the garden, this will occur in the first half of 2018.

This year, the Ten Deserts project consolidated and evolved into something much more than it has previously been. Part of this is attributed to the contribution of time to help organise and facilitate the inaugural Southern Deserts Ranger Forum at Ilkurlka, 900km east of Kalgoorlie in the Great Victoria Desert. Here in June, 85 people consisting of more than 60 indigenous rangers got together and shared stories, learned about tourism compliance, rifle safety, buffel grass management and conducted important cultural business.

The event was hailed a success and planning is underway to organise another one in June 2018. This event was one of the most important milestones of the Ten Deserts Initiative through supporting an on-country workshop and thanks to NG Media, the whole event was filmed and screened on national television via NITV in October.

In other regional news, the Ten Deserts project is on the cusp of potential funding from the BHP Billiton Foundation. Many shared hours







have been spent in the development of the comprehensive funding proposal submitted by Desert Support Services. This \$20.8M project will be the single biggest environmental project in desert Australia. It is hoped that if this is successful it will create many opportunities for leveraging support from a variety of government sources.

ALEC is a member of the steering committee of the project that will incorporate activities across WA, SA and NT that will reduce the threats to the environment through active management of camels, regional fire planning and buffel grass, while building capacity of indigenous rangers to better protect their country and develop opportunities to sustain their activities through tourism and other ventures.

The growth of Arid Edge has been a great success and has supported ALEC financially, but the struggle to secure enough funding continues. Key ALEC roles, the Director, Communications Manager and Business Manager roles remain unfunded. ALEC will be rolling out a Fundraising plan and throughout the year will be asking for your support.

Please consider becoming a member and/or a tax deductible Desert Defender. Every bit helps and the more we receive, the more we can do.

**In 2018 key objectives include:**

- Pressuring the NT Government to adopt a climate policy with a target of net zero emissions by 2050.
- Contributing to the development of a robust environmental regulatory system in the NT
- Campaigning to ban fracking
- Working towards the vision of 100% renewable energy for Alice Springs by 2030
- Protecting the outback from inappropriate development like the Chandler Salt Mine toxic waste dump proposal
- Continuing to develop collaborative land management practices across the arid interior through the Ten Deserts project
- Encouraging Central Australian communities to become more sustainable through energy, water and waste education

Keep up to date at [www.alec.org.au](http://www.alec.org.au)

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GREAT GIFT IDEA?**

**GIVE AN ALEC  
MEMBERSHIP  
AS A GIFT!**



## ALEC MEDIA

### ROADMAP TO RENEWABLES – A GOOD START 28.11.17

The Arid Lands Environment Centre welcomes the release of the Northern Territory Government's Roadmap to Renewables. The much-anticipated report confirms that the technology both currently exists and is affordable to meet the 50% renewable energy target.

In supporting the recommendations of the Roadmap the Gunner Government is bringing the Northern Territory in line with renewable energy commitments of other states and territories. This is a great start, but in the absence of a comprehensive climate policy, this Roadmap alone will not reduce the carbon emissions in the NT to the degree necessary to meet Paris climate commitments.

The omission of INPEX and other large projects undermines the carbon reductions this 50% renewable target will bring. INPEX is anticipated to use as much electricity as the Darwin Katherine grid in total, and the government needs to look at how they are going to reduce emissions from these large projects.

ALEC supports:

- the whole of government approach to integrating renewable energy into its' programs and budgets
- the immediate investment of \$4.5 million for co-contribution grants of up to \$1000 to households for energy efficiency measures
- Alice Springs as a renewable energy hub
- the separation of Power Water networks and system control
- pausing the process of committing the territory to the National Electricity Rules
- regulatory changes to support greater uptake of renewable energy

- a ten year investment plan for renewable energy
- greater diversity in the energy market
- mining companies/infrastructure projects to have a minimum renewable energy component
- community engagement and education programs

ALEC recommends:

- the NT Government not limit itself to the 50% target, and like some other states start aiming for 100%
- develops a NT climate policy and carbon pollution reduction target to compliment the roll out of the Roadmap
- demonstrates leadership by developing an energy efficiency and solar roll out plan for all government buildings and Territory Housing
- large projects like INPEX are included in the renewable energy target
- the rapid development of an implementation plan with timelines for all recommendations made in the Roadmap

"ALEC welcomes the release of the Roadmap and the governments commitment to its implementation. Now we need to see action. The NT is especially vulnerable to climate change and we need our government to lead," said Jimmy Cocking, Director Arid Lands Environment Centre. "Increasing carbon pollution is no longer an option, energy policy is climate policy and this Roadmap is just the start."

### COMMUNITY SEEKS ANSWERS ABOUT HAZARDOUS WASTE AT CHANDLER MINE 3.11.17

Strong community concern was expressed over the proposal to permanently store hazardous waste at the Chandler Salt Mine at a public







meeting held last night in Alice Springs.

More than 30 local Titjikala residents travelled to attend the meeting, and were joined by concerned residents from the Alice Springs community. The meeting was facilitated by the Arid Lands Environment Centre and sought to raise awareness about the permanent hazardous waste storage facility proposal.

Key points from the meeting included:

- A united belief that the region should not be a sacrifice zone for hazardous waste from across Australia.
- There has been a lack of transparency around native title negotiations and what the company is promising the community. Some members of the community claim they were not informed of the storage of hazardous waste for geological time.
- The native title claimants are concerned that the project will interfere with their cultural rights such as hunting and the ability to teach and grow with the next generations.
- The lack of a sufficient regulatory framework and no long term monitoring plan for the project
- Environmental concerns including the impact of hydraulic backfilling on the stability of the salt, security of surface storage of waste, and accidents and spillage on roads and the Maryvale and Henbury stations

“Significant community concern was expressed at last night’s meeting about the permanent storage of hazardous waste at the proposed Chandler Salt mine site,” said Jimmy Cocking, Director of the Arid Lands Environment Centre.

“Titjikala community members do not feel they have been properly informed about the full nature of the project and have significant concerns on how this project may impact on the cultural responsibilities of looking after country, and activities such as hunting,” said Jimmy Cocking.

“The Arid Lands Environment Centre provided an interpreter at last night’s meeting to ensure that all residents understood the information presented as well as had the opportunity to express their concerns and be understood. It is critically important with projects like these that community concerns are addressed.”

“On behalf of the people who attended the public meeting ALEC will be writing to the Northern Territory Environmental Protection Authority requesting that the community’s concerns are addressed in the assessment of the Environmental Impact Statement, and will be organising another meeting on country to enable more Titjikala residents to have the opportunity to understand the full implications of the project,” said Jimmy Cocking.



Chandler Salt Mine Public Meeting



## NT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO SHINE AS FEDS DIG ANOTHER CLIMATE HOLE 17.10.17

The Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) joins many other Australians today in condemning the Turnbull Government’s continued attacks on renewable energy with the scrapping of the clean energy target.

In one of the sunniest places in the world with vast coastlines that provide ample opportunities for a diversity of renewable energy sources, our Federal Government has caved in to the extreme right, and its fossil fuel lobby.

“Whilst this announcement is not surprising, it is disappointing to be reminded of who is pulling the strings in the Federal COALition,” said Jimmy Cocking Director of the Arid Lands Environment Centre.

“The wilful negligence of this Federal Government will see it condemned by current and future generations as we globally grapple for collective action on climate change.”

“The Northern Territory Government needs to distance itself from the chaos in Canberra, and stand up to the bullying from Turnbull and his gas fracking mates.”

“Thankfully here in the Territory the government has a 50% renewable energy target by 2030 and are currently developing a Roadmap to Renewables and a much anticipated climate policy.”

“The future is in renewable energy and the world is transitioning towards it. The only thing holding Australia back is a failure of federal leadership and vested interests in the fossil fuel industry. In the absence of national leadership local, state and territory governments need to step up, just like in the United States under Trump.”

ALEC continues to advocate for 100% renewable energy by 2030 for Alice Springs, no new fossil fuel projects or infrastructure, a decarbonisation plan, and investment in climate adaptation initiatives for the NT.

## COAL IS DEAD – ZOMBIE PERDIRKA COAL-TO-GAS PROJECT RAISES ITS HEAD 10.10.17

Last week’s announcement by Ebony Energy who plan to develop a coal to gas project at Andado station, 250 kilometres south east of Alice Springs, is a cynical attempt to garner interest with energy investors in a project that is a long way off materialising.

Ebony Energy is an unlisted exploration company that has not secured a mining lease, has not done an environmental impact statement, and has not secured native title agreements for the Perdirka Basin site.

This announcement also comes at a time when countries all around the world are abandoning coal projects as part of the transition to renewable energy to meet carbon reduction targets.

“Coal is dead,” said Jimmy Cocking, Director of the Arid Lands Environment Centre. “It’s expensive, dirty and polluting. Over the last 2 years developing countries around the world have retired 128 coal-fired generators as countries and economies transition to renewable energy. As renewables become cheaper coal no longer makes economic sense.”

“This announcement is a cynical ploy from an industry in crisis to garner investment interest and to put pressure on the Northern Territory Government. Whilst a \$3 billion project with 2000 jobs sounds exciting, this project is a very long way off producing anything,” said Jimmy Cocking.







“The head of Ebony Energy is Stephen Gerlach, who was the former chair of Santos when they made the decision to build the export terminals at Gladstone. This decision has directly caused the so-called ‘east coast gas supply crisis’ – where gas is being exported rather than servicing local communities. To propose this coal-to-gas project as part of a solution to a problem that was caused by the decisions of the now head of Ebony Energy himself is a bit rich.”

“This mine will be contested. There is no social licence for new coal mines and there never will be again. We have just seen thousands of people across Australia protest against the Adani coal mine in Queensland over the weekend, and these protests will continue as citizens demand a rapid transition to renewable energy, which is now cheaper and makes more economic sense,” said Jimmy Cocking.

### **NT GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY ON MINING ENVIRONMENTAL BONDS WELCOMED 14.9.17**

The Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) welcomes the Northern Territory Government’s adoption of a policy of disclosure for mining security bond amounts. The Government will now disclose the amount of security held against individual authorised mining activities projects, including for exploration, extractive and mines. Previously, the total finance of these bonds and individual amounts for mines has been withheld from the public, which is a major barrier to ensuring the environmental accountability and transparency of the industry.

Mining companies are required under law to provide a certain sum to the government to fund the cost of rehabilitating the site after mining is complete in the form of an environmental security. Bonds also operate as a financial incentive for compliance with the Mining Management Act and cover the cost of any

environmental damage as a result of regulatory breaches.

“This policy shift represents a major step forward in improving transparency and accountability of the industry which is drastically needed for ongoing community acceptance of mining in the NT,” said Alex Read, Policy Officer at the ALEC.

“The capability of a mining project to gain and hold a social licence is dependent on the company being able to prove environmental credentials for the project and to provide the necessary finance for rehabilitation. Security bonds are necessary to ensure that proper environmental rehabilitation can occur regardless of the financial state of the company, and so this expense does not fall back to the community,” said Alex Read.

“This decision comes at a time when the Territory is already grappling with the issue of legacy mines that are leaching contaminants into the environment because companies are escaping rehabilitation and compliance responsibilities. Most of these sites ceased operations before 2005 and predated the requirements for operators to lodge a rehabilitation security bond. The estimated level of historical mining liabilities is \$1 billion.”

“ALEC will continue to advocate for cleaning up existing sites, responsible environmental policies and a transparent and accountable resources sector,” said Alex Read.

The total security figures for each operating mine can be accessed at: <https://dpir.nt.gov.au/mining-and-energy/mines-and-energy-publications-information-and-statistics/mining-environmental-reports/mining-securities>

Note: Mining management plans for major operating mines remain commercial in confidence.



### **POLL REVEALS MAJORITY TERRITORIANS OPPOSE FRACKING, MEANWHILE NT LAGS ON RENEWABLES 1.9.17**

A MediaReach poll conducted for the NT News has revealed 51 per cent of Territorians support a ban on fracking.

With support for a ban on fracking higher in rural areas, Alice Springs, Katherine, Daly and Palmerston, some of the key constituents that supported Labor’s sweep to power in the last election, the issue of fracking is turning into a headache for the Gunner Government.

Meanwhile a Climate Council report released today has listed the Northern Territory last in the Australian state by state renewable energy race.

“The MediaReach Poll provides more evidence that the practice of fracking is not supported by the majority of Territorians, who have legitimate concerns about impacts on groundwater, the environment and climate change,” said Nicole Pietsch, Communications Manager of the Arid Lands Environment Centre.

“In the last few weeks we have heard that if the McArthur Basin was fracked it could release four to five times as much greenhouse gas emissions

as the proposed Adani Carmichael mine. If fracking is allowed to go ahead in areas like the McArthur Basin this would be a serious threat to our climate and would undermine any action the Northern Territory takes to reduce carbon emissions,” Nicole Pietsch said.

“The impacts of inaction on climate change this week are being felt across the globe as we see extreme flooding in America, India and Bangladesh – storms that have intensified as a result of our warming planet. As a collective we must urgently move away from fossil fuels and make the quick transition to renewable energy.”

“The Climate Council’s report released today, ‘Renewables Ready; States Leading the Charge’, shows the NT rates last on the state and territories renewable energy scorecard for 2017, despite introducing a 50% renewable energy target by 2030 and having made some investments in battery storage.”

“Considering we are one of the sunniest places in Australia and have the most generous solar feed in tariffs this result is just not good enough. We call on the Gunner Government to abandon any unpopular plans for fracking and expanding the fossil fuel industry, and fast-track the Northern Territory’s transition to renewable energy,” said Nicole Pietsch.





# Critical Decade 2017: Accelerating Climate Action

Australia's critical window of opportunity to tackle climate change is closing, with a new landmark report from the Climate Council revealing our nation is falling behind the rest of the world, failing to tackle climate change as pollution levels continue to rise.

The 'Critical Decade 2017: Accelerating Climate Action' report, shows Australia is highly vulnerable to many consequences of a changing climate, from worsening heatwaves, droughts and bushfires, to devastating coral reef bleaching, while most of the nation's population centres are also highly exposed to sea level rise.

## Key findings:

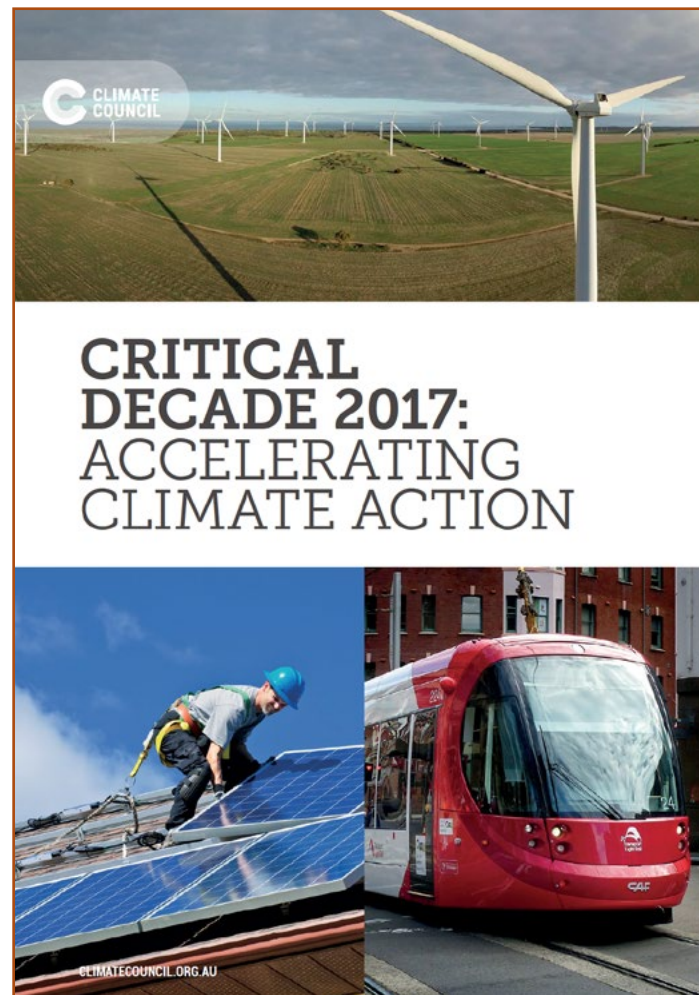
- Australia is failing to tackle climate change with emissions rising and a lack of any coherent, long-term national approach to reduce emissions in the short, medium or long term. We are known as a global climate laggard.
- Failure to rapidly and deeply reduce greenhouse gas emissions increases the risk of deteriorating human health and well-being, massive forced migration and conflict, crippling economic damage around the world, and the Earth's sixth great extinction event.
- Australia is highly vulnerable to many of the consequences of a changing climate, from worsening heatwaves, droughts and bushfires, to devastating coral reef bleaching, and most of our population centres being exposed to sea level rise.
- Amongst the G20 countries, Australia's emission reduction target – a reduction of 26-28% on a 2005 baseline – is unusually weak, nowhere near what is required for us to play our fair share in meeting 2°C Paris target.
- Renewable energy has already replaced ageing, polluting fossil fuels as the energy

system of the future, with the installation of solar and wind systems globally doubling every 5.4 years.

- Maintaining this rate of renewable expansion could see the world's energy systems completely eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

Download the report at <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/critical-decade-2017>

Read more on how the Federal Government's Energy Plan Stacks Up <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/neg-stacks-up>



For 9 years ALEC has been at the table working directly on landscape-scale conservation. The NT Government established Territory EcoLink in 2009 to connect the majority of the NT's conservation sites and create a nature corridor running 2000 kilometres north-south, ALEC was a member of the expert reference panel.

In 2010, through a Memorandum of Understanding between the NT and SA Governments, the Territory EcoLink joined with the South Australian Nature Links to form the 3500km long Trans-Australian EcoLink (TAE). Momentum was building around large-scale landscape connectivity conservation. In late 2011, the Federal Government developed the National Wildlife Corridor Plan that included the TAE. In late 2012, the Country Liberal Party Government ended the funding for the TAE.

In September 2013, ALEC along with a range of stakeholders from the Northern Territory and South Australia were brought together by Greening Australia as the next stage of the National Wildlife Corridor Plan. The funding was to support stakeholder engagement and develop collective support for a large-scale project. The initial meeting resulted in support to develop a central Australian arid focused project.

At the next meeting in December 2013, we named the project 7 Deserts and realised we needed Western Australians around the

table. ALEC was contracted to develop a stakeholder engagement process. In June 2014, stakeholders working across the now, Ten Deserts (the Perdirka, Sturt Stony and Tirari – were 'discovered'), and established a working group, adopted principles and developed a vision. Some funds were committed and the Ten Deserts became the largest cross-border collaborative conservation project in Australia.

The ALEC Director became the part-time Coordinator of the Ten Deserts Initiative and got busy. Attending events in Perth and the inaugural Indigenous Desert Ranger meeting as part of the World Parks Congress in Sydney. Among the great networking, a commitment was made by the groups to establish an Indigenous Desert Network to support rangers working together and building momentum for indigenous rangers in the desert country.

While the Indigenous Desert Network and Ten Deserts shared a number of partners, the focus was different. The Ten Deserts was focused on the key threats to biodiversity and ecological integrity, while the Indigenous Desert Network/Alliance focused on supporting collaboration and knowledge sharing between indigenous rangers. A website was set up in early 2015 [www.tendeserts.org](http://www.tendeserts.org) to provide an entry point for the project.

In April 2015 the Ten Deserts face-to-face workshop was held in Alice Springs alongside the Australian Rangelands Society conference. More than 40 people representing more than 30 organisations working across the arid lands came together to discuss the priorities and key threats to the integrity of the desert country. The key threats that were discussed and agreed upon were the spread of invasive buffel grass and large-scale fire.

The Ten Deserts was presented at the Indigenous Desert Alliance meeting in Perth. Momentum was building and support for large-





scale conservation in the desert country. Funds were committed by Pew Charitable Trusts to enable part-time coordination of the Ten Deserts for 2 years, with the aim of leveraging up more resources to support outcomes. The Nature Conservancy provided funds to support the face-to-face workshop in 2016 and support for filming an on-country workshop.

Roadmaps for the Buffel Free Great Victoria Desert and the Ten Deserts project were developed in August. Partners from the Indigenous Desert Alliance attended and worked on possible carbon and payment for ecosystem services projects. The collaboration between the Indigenous Desert Alliance and Ten Deserts was growing. In late 2016, ALEC was a partner in the development of an expression of interest to the BHP Billiton Foundation in the indigenous led Ten Deserts Project proposal.

In June 2017, the ALEC Director played a role in supporting the organisation and facilitation of the inaugural Southern Deserts Ranger Forum held at Ilkurlka, in the Great Victoria Desert, 900kms east of Kalgoorlie, WA. The joint project between the Ten Deserts and the Indigenous

Desert Alliance had more than 80 people attend and more than 60 indigenous rangers. Skills training, scenarios and role-playing, forums and presentations not to mention cultural business and networking made for a highly successful event.

In December 2017, the partners in the Ten Deserts Project will know whether or not 5 years of project funding will be made available through the Foundation bid. The quality of the submission was high and indications are positive. It's an amazing possibility. The Ten Deserts Initiative, as ALEC has coordinated it, will then be finished and the new philanthropic funded indigenous led Ten Deserts project by Desert Support Services will take over.

It's very exciting to be a part of this and an honour and a privilege to play a small role in catalysing and building momentum for large-scale arid lands management. Looking forward to 2018 and beyond as desert rangers and collaborative conservation take a front seat.

**Jimmy Cocking**  
**Ten Deserts Coordinator**



## ALEC POLICY

There are great transformations happening in the environmental policy space in the NT. The new government has engaged in the review and reform of key environmental acts to strengthen the level of environmental protection through law.

This includes a shift in water policy to include Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves which will make the NT a leader for the equitable management of water. It will enable aboriginal groups to utilise their water entitlements for economic opportunity, entitlements that have been historically denied. ALEC will be involved in the implementation of this policy in negotiation through the Western Davenport Water Advisory Committee.

The contribution of ALEC to policy development in 2017 has been acknowledged by the NT Government in several areas including mining, law and water. This is encouraging and uplifting.

However, the year is not slowing down. There are several significant consultation processes that are currently accepting submissions. Broad planning reform is being undertaken to review the planning vision for the urban centres of the Territory as well as the planning regulatory framework. Planning for a Vibrant future is and Review, Reframe and Renew are before the end of December.

ALEC submissions to these will advocate for the inclusion of climate change as a guiding principle to ensure adaptation and mitigation is a mandatory consideration in planning processes. Ecologically sustainable development should underpin the design of planning guidelines.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Verdant Ammaroo Phosphate project has been released for public consultation. Critical oversight of EISs are vital to ensuring that mining

is conducted in a way that is truly ecologically sustainable and operates only with the support of local Aboriginal communities.

This phosphate project is planned close to the community of Ampilatwaja, 270 km north east of Alice Springs. The proposal is to mine phosphate ore through shallow pits, concentrate the rock on site and transport along a new rail line to the central railway to be transported to Darwin for export to Asian markets.

Through reviewing the EIS we will ensure that there the EPA receives as much information as possible about the risks so that it can regulate and monitor the project to ensure there will be no lasting or significant environmental impacts. Waste rock treatment, rehabilitation and surface water management are priority areas of review.

The EIS consultation stage is important in holding the company accountable to their environmental responsibilities to deliver robust and adaptive environmental management.

Heading into 2018 we are refining our strategic policy priorities. Through alliances with the Environment Centre NT we will be advocating for a progressive and comprehensive climate change policy to be adopted by the NT Government. The focus of this policy is on pushing for the government to acknowledge that development and opportunity can occur alongside emissions reductions.

The Territory must commit to an emissions reduction target to bring it in line with most other states and territories as well as it being a moral and ethical imperative. We will be developing a policy that acknowledges the opportunity in emissions reduction strategies such as carbon sequestration. Climate change is projected to have a severe impact on the NT so it is vital that







the Government adopt a policy that reduces our emissions and prepares the land for a warming climate.

The second major policy priority for ALEC will be progressing the environmental regulatory reform project. ALEC has learnt from experts in mining management about the need to implement a regulatory system that properly enforces a system of chain of responsibility.

Failures to comply with rehabilitation plans or simply inadequate remediation efforts characterize the mining industry in the NT but that history is coming to an end.

With the public release of the mining security bonds, there is a unique opportunity to shift the culture of environmental assessment in the NT towards a more transparent, accountable and effective system of environmental regulation. Fundamental to this is undermining the role of sectoral approvals and executive discretion in decision making processes, especially in the pastoral industry.

Environmental decisions are being made without reference to transparent, objective criteria



informed by science. This is allowing industry to make development decisions with disastrous environmental impacts. Next year will involve a concerted push towards greater consistency in decision making processes to ensure that environmental factors determine the outcome of decisions with environmental risks, not only commercial imperatives.

In 2018 policy will continue to be developed in collaboration with the community. We encourage anyone with interests in any of the above issues to make their own submissions during those consultation processes.

Otherwise we would encourage anyone with expertise in the above to come into the office to support the submissions we will be making. Our message of ecologically sustainable development is strengthened and legitimated through community support in the formal consultation process.

2018 brings a renewed sense of possibility while remaining acutely aware of the ongoing threats posed by the mining industry and climate change.

**Findings from the independent review into water licence decisions**

The Northern Territory Government has released their findings from an independent review into all water allocation licences granted under the previous CLP government. The findings are thorough and illuminating. They include widespread instances of non-compliance with the Water Act and numerous instances of unsubstantiated decision making.

While no licences were recommended to be revoked, the findings highlight the need for broad systemic change to prevent arbitrary and opaque decision making.



The culture of water allocation in the NT under the previous Government was characterised by highly discretionary and closed decision making that was not based on sound scientific advice or sufficient monitoring regimes.

Regarding the water sources of Alice Springs, the review noted the need for a comprehensive dedicated monitoring program in the Rocky Hill management zone to safeguard the quality and volume of future water supply for domestic use. There are serious reservations about the validity of the science that underpinned the decision to grant an agricultural licence in the Rocky Hill zone.

Substantial changes to the Water Act are needed to guide decision makers through the process of

assessing water extraction licences. Objective, transparent and compulsory criteria are needed to ensure that extraction decisions are based on sound science and do not compromise the environmental, social and cultural values of water. The protection of our groundwater sources, both quality and quantity is fundamental to our way of life here in the arid zone.

ALEC commends the findings of this inquiry and will continue to advocate to strengthen water protections by ensuring these findings are implemented in law and ensure that the situation is never repeated.

Alex Read  
ALEC Policy Officer

**UTOPIA FOOD GARDENS PROJECT**

**A case study in models of success and failure of food gardens in remote indigenous communities**

**THE PROJECT'S GOAL IS:**  
To increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables for residents of the Utopia Homelands through gardens and nutrition activities

**2016-17 Snapshot**

- 13 gardens across 10 homelands
- 71 vegetable varieties and 3.4 fruit trees grown in each garden (on average)
- 6/7 women, 50 men 62 kids
- 772 participant visits per year (average 6.2 per participant)
- 190 days horticulturist and 49 days of nutritionist on the ground
- 36 cook-ups

**Quick Facts:**

- "Merne murde" means "good food" in Alyawarr language
- Established in 2009 by GPNT (now Primary Health Network NT)
- The Utopia homelands are 16 outstations, located 250km NE of Alice Springs in Central Australia

**As a result of this project, community members are:**

- Able to access fresh fruit and vegetables more regularly as part of their diet
- Gaining a greater understanding of a nutritious diet and having some control over food choices
- Cooking more often, in preference to high sugar and high fat convenience foods
- Gaining building skills leading to opportunities for local employment
- Having the opportunity for physical activity and a meaningful pass time

**All gardens are developed to meet the articulated needs of each outstation and the relationships that are there, this means: some are shared gardens, many are household gardens, all are food gardens on community but not necessarily community gardens**

**"We like to cook with the kale. We better plant more next year, we used it all up too quickly this year!"**  
Lucky Morton, Inkawerreyerle (Rocket Range)





# Fracking pipeline construction starts

While Australia's environmental movement focuses on the Adani carbon bomb, a fuse for another carbon bomb has been lit. On June 8th, Northern Territory Mines and Primary Industry Minister Ken Vowles approved the construction of the first stage of the Northern Gas Pipeline (NGP).

The proposed pipeline is owned by Jemena, an 'Australian' company established by state-owned entities China State Grid (60%) and Singapore Power (40%). The 622km pipeline is proposed to connect to the Amadeus pipeline (existing Alice Springs to Darwin pipeline) linking NT gas supplies to the east coast, connecting from Tennant Creek to Mt Isa in Queensland.

The initial contract is a 10 year supply agreement between the NT Government owned Power and Water Corporation and Incitec Pivot. While the initial contract is focused on conventional gas sourced from the Blacktip gas field in the Top End of the NT; Jemena clearly stated its intention in the Environmental Impact Statement for the project, which is to drive the development of the onshore gas (aka unconventional, fracked shale gas) industry.

The Northern Territory is said to have an abundance of shale gas resources deep under the ground. The process of extracting this shale gas requires deep drilling (between 1-4km underground) and up to 2km of horizontal drilling through the shale rock layer. Large amounts of water (between 4-20 million litres) and a range of chemicals including household cleaners and any number of undisclosed and untested chemicals are added with sand and guar gum and pumped at high pressure into the exploration well.

The high-pressure water and chemical mix

breaks up the shale layer and releases the gas from the shale rock, this is what is called a 'frack'. Wells require many fracks over the life of a production well, with some of the toxic mix remaining underground and the rest of it being left in evaporation ponds to be stored permanently in a licensed waste facility. The fracked gas can be a mixture of methane and other climate warming gases including hydrogen sulphide, nitrous oxides and sulphur dioxides amongst others.

The impacts of the shale gas industry on communities in the United States are only just being realised. Connectivity between gas wells and aquifers have been found to be a source of groundwater contamination and methane leakage rates of up to 10% renders shale gas as polluting as coal as an energy source.

Communities across the Northern Territory have been standing up against fracking for the past 5 years and opposition to fracking was largely seen as the reason for the landslide election swing against the Country Liberal Party in August 2016.

Opponents of the gas pipeline are concerned about the pipeline's enabling impact on the shale gas fracking industry that is currently reeling from the relatively new Territory Labor Government's moratorium on fracking and the establishment of a Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing. The Inquiry, headed by Justice Rachel Pepper has been consulting communities across the Northern Territory since April 2017 and is set to release the findings and recommendations to the NT Government by the end of the year.

A moratorium on gas fracking has been placed on the specific act of fracking, but companies can still carry out seismic testing, drilling and other

activities as part of their exploration licence.

The pressure on the NT Government from the gas lobby is building. The budget cuts to GST revenue for the Northern Territory and Federal Government budgeted feasibility studies for another pipeline through the Simpson Desert is all part of the push for opening the NT up for fracking.

The previous Giles Country Liberal Government spent millions of taxpayer dollars on advertising for the gas industry and among other dubious activities related to the fossil fuel industry, gave Jemena the go-ahead to proceed with the development of the pipeline in 2015. The EIS for the project detailed only the specific impacts of the pipeline corridor with a 30m clearing over its length and does not consider the cumulative impacts of the project that has a stated economic purpose of opening up the Northern Territory to fracking.

90% of the Northern Territory landmass is groundwater dependent. That means everyone outside of Darwin is dependent on water from aquifers deep under the ground. 85% of the Northern Territory is subject to Petroleum exploration licences, all of which would require fracking to extract the gas. The recent approval of the pipeline is a serious concern for all Australians.

The east coast gas crisis was the selling point for the pipeline under the previous NT government, now it is abundantly clear that all the gas in Australia is not going to 'fix' the export driven supply problems that the gas companies have manufactured. The pressure to frack the NT is a ploy to open up new gasfields and export markets, not solve the gas supply issues on the east coast. It is an increasingly known fact that the 'gas crisis' requires market intervention and not a liberalising of land access for unscrupulous gas companies.

The beauty of the Northern Territory is a testament to its land and its people. Collectively Australians have stood up to protect the NT from uranium mines and nuclear waste dumps. Today we're asking if you can do it again.

We are small in number here in the NT and vast distances separate us from each other and our supporters across the continent. We are calling on all Australians to reject Jemena's Northern Gas Pipeline and join in the campaign to stop it opening up the NT to fracking. Please get involved and do what you can to stop this fracking pipeline. We cannot win this battle in the NT alone, it requires collective efforts across Australia.

- Contact the NT Chief Minister [chief.minister@nt.gov.au](mailto:chief.minister@nt.gov.au), ph 08 8936 5500
- Mines Minister Vowles [minister.vowles@nt.gov.au](mailto:minister.vowles@nt.gov.au) 08 8936 5680
- Like the Don't Frack the NT, Central Australian Frack Free Alliance and Arid Lands Environment Centre facebook pages
- use the hashtags #noNTPL #banfracking
- [http://www.alec.org.au/don\\_t\\_frack\\_the\\_outback](http://www.alec.org.au/don_t_frack_the_outback)
- <http://dontfracktheterritory.org/>

**Jimmy Cocking**  
**ALEC Director**







Dianne Newham, a member of the core CAFFA team, recently commented, "Another year, and still no fracking in the Territory...And the end of an absolutely huge year. Lots to celebrate!"

It is so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day ups and downs of a campaign that we forget to step back, observe the big picture, and reflect on what has been achieved, and where we are headed.

To remind you of the big picture; 83% of the Territory is at risk of fracking. An ongoing Inquiry into the practice of onshore shale gas fracking

will release its recommendations in March 2018. One thing that is very clear from the Inquiry thus far, is that Majority of Territorians do not want fracking, and do not trust the industry.

Dianne is right. Another year with no fracking in the Territory is considerable cause to celebrate. That is, another year, where invasive gas companies have stayed off the land communities are fighting to protect, another year where our drinking water has not been at risk of contamination due to fracking, another year that the Territory landscape has remained untouched by shale gas drilling rigs and machinery, and another year, that considerable methane emissions have not been released into our warming climate.

Across the Territory 2017 has seen alliances grow. Communities, towns, pastoralists, faith groups, and NGO's have come together to demonstrate their opposition to fracking and make sure both the Inquiry as well as the Territory government hears this message.

CAFFA has had a big year establishing relationships with local MLA's, conducting community outreach and education, and political lobbying to pressure key decision makers. In doing this, CAFFA hosted economist Rod Campbell as he toured the Territory raising awareness about the economics of gas mining, presented in force to the Inquiry when it visited Alice Springs, heard from standing rock activists about their fight and the lessons learned along the way, and mobilized across the electorate of Braitling to hold cabinet member Dale Wakefield to account on the strong desire of her constituents to push for a ban on fracking.

There was also a strong Central Australian contingent at the recent Water is Life Rally in Darwin on the steps of parliament. This rally sent a message to the NT government loud and clear. Ban Fracking Now.



There is no doubt that 2018 will be a very important year. Ultimately, the decision is one of a political nature. As such, CAFFA will be focused on, and making every effort to ensure our decision makers know where the community stands and supporting them to stand up for their electorate.

To get involved and make sure your voice is heard reach out via email to [frackfreecoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:frackfreecoordinator@gmail.com).



*Water is Life Rally, Darwin*

## Water is Life Rally, 17th November 2018

On the 17th of November Aboriginal communities across the NT came together to demonstrate their opposition to fracking on the steps of parliament house in Darwin. They were joined by hundreds of people across the NT from towns and stations to stand together and protect country, water and climate.

I was fortunate enough to have been a part of this growing movement through ALEC by providing transport support. I drove the ALEC bus from Alice picking people up from Elliott, Marlinja, Mataranka and Katherine to Darwin to come together for the rally and fracking forum. The rally was a powerful demonstration of community coming together to acknowledge the precious value of water and protect country from this toxic industry.

The Aboriginal led fracking forum resulted in a definitive statement from communities against fracking because of the unacceptable risk it poses to their country. The strength, resilience and passion within these communities was palpable. With the help of SEED, groups shared their concerns and worked towards actions moving forward to ensure that fracking is never allowed on country. Communities expressed a lack of confidence in the NLC and frustration

with lies coming from the gas companies and the Government. They are building this movement to make more communities gas field free like Borroloola.

Through this experience I made connections with many people from different communities. I heard firsthand why Aboriginal communities are fighting so hard to protect their land from gas companies. Being able to see their country and the sites they want protected really grounded my opposition to fracking which has been largely abstract.

I was inspired by the events of the weekend and learnt a lot through enabling participation in environmental protection. It was also very humbling to spend time with and hear stories of country from the people who are on the front line of this struggle against the gas industry.

Communities are galvanized in their opposition to fracking and this event was another significant step in pushing for an indefinite ban. ALEC will maintain these links with communities so that their concerns and issues can inform the fracking campaign and the direction of policy advocacy here in the arid zone.

**Alex Read**  
**ALEC Policy Officer**





# BAN FRACKING, PROTECT COUNTRY

Statement from the Aboriginal Fracking Forum, 19 November 2017

We speak from Aboriginal communities right across the Territory.  
And we have come together to take a stand against fracking.

And we say no. We say no to fracking on our land, on our country.

We are concerned about the damage to our water, our country,  
our dreaming and our songlines.

This damage would be irreversible.

We don't want to see our rivers and waters poisoned. We want to be  
able to fish and hunt, gather bush tucker and bush medicines now and  
for all generations of people to come.

We have been told lies by gas companies, telling us there will be  
no impacts. That there will be one or two frack wells, not a gas field  
with hundreds or even thousands of wells.

Other states in Australia have banned fracking and so have many  
nations around the world because it's so risky.

We refuse to be lied to anymore.

We know that fracking will bring chemicals that will contaminate our  
water and damage our health. Drilling in one area has a bigger impact  
than just that place. It will damage neighboring language groups on  
country and the entire water system.

We want our water to be clean and healthy. For all of us.

People and country are one and the same, any damage to our country  
impacts us, our identity and who we are.

We will not be divided by others who do not understand  
the lore of the land.

We will stand strong and stand together. We will do what it takes to see  
a permanent ban on fracking, there will be no sacrifice zones.

We represent a growing movement of Aboriginal people coming  
together to stop fracking and protect country.

We call on this Government to hear us and to take action.

We stand together, and we will do what we must to protect our  
country for future generations. Because without water and without  
clean country none of us can survive.

We are here and we are not going away until you hear us.



Repower continues to power on! We are pleased to launch our new logo. A new bright logo has been designed so that it can be printed on our new marquee and marketing collateral (made possible by receiving the CANA grant). Thank you to local designer Nico Liegme for designing it. We look forward to seeing it on T-shirts and stickers soon.

We would love to see more people being involved in Repower Alice Springs, and a good way to start is coming along to a coordination group meeting - these are on the first Monday of every month at 5pm at ALEC.

We will be holding a planning session to kick off next year at the beginning of February, and will be looking to fill key volunteer roles for our community group. More details will be provided nearer the time but please consider if you have any time you can contribute to help deliver our vision of 100% renewable energy by 2030.

Progress reports from our three subgroups are as follows:

#### Power

- A planning session for developing community power initiative/s was held on Saturday 4 November. It was a very successful day with 17 people attending, and we are now preparing to develop our first community power project.

- To kick-start our community power project we were looking for passionate people with legal, financial and business management expertise to join our working group. If this is you email Lou at [loulastanley@gmail.com](mailto:loulastanley@gmail.com)
- Thank you to the Climate Action Network Australia (<http://www.cana.net.au/>) for the grant which helped make this happen, a big thank you to Tom Nockholds from the Community Power Agency <http://cpagency.org.au/> who was our facilitator for the day, and thank you to the Alice Springs Town Council who supported us through the provision of the Andy McNeil room for the day for free.
- Ongoing meetings with Territory Generation discussing future opportunities for solar
- NT Environment grant application submitted

#### Politics & Policy

- Meeting held with Minister McCarthy to continue advocating for 100% solar, provide an update as to Repower's progress and raise the issue of street voltages and the impact on solar.
- Deputation to the Alice Springs Town Council Monday 20th November

#### People

- Our Community Solar Survey was closed and we held a public meeting in October to provide feedback to our community about the survey results. Key findings included:
- 76% of respondents want more than 70% of our power to be from solar
- 78% believed we need more solar to reduce carbon emissions
- 70% of respondents believe the barriers to solar are political, not technical
- We will be refocussing our people group to further educate our community about solar power, and gathering support for future community power initiatives.
- Successful community presentation of our solar survey results at the Andy McNeil Room 12.10.17 with approximately 25 people attending



**MEDIA RELEASE 29 November 2017**

## **RePower Alice Springs already on the Road to Renewables**

Recommending stronger community engagement, the Northern Territory Government's Roadmap to Renewables report released this week offers big wins for the environment, the community, economy and thus the Government, according to RePower Alice Springs.

RePower is a renewable energy advocacy and development group working towards 100 per cent renewable power for Alice Springs by 2030. The RePower effort aligns with 76 per cent of 816 respondents in its recent community survey who want 70 - 100 per cent of the town's power from renewable sources.

The Roadmap's own consultations found the community wants governments to lead more aggressively in adopting renewable energy, and to support households and businesses who want to contribute with their own investment in renewable technologies.

The Roadmap report said renewable energy could stimulate significant economic development, job creation, industry growth and new investment in the NT. Accordingly, its first recommendation is for the Government to include renewable energy as a central pillar of economic policy.

The Roadmap report also notes that the NT has a high proportion (40 per cent) of rental and government housing which has not taken up rooftop solar. It says the Government should investigate technologies and business models to allow electricity customers to benefit from solar panels installed somewhere else than their rental property; and make Alice Springs a hub for solar energy research and development.

"The Government now needs to meet these community expectations, take up these massive opportunities and accept such recommendations from the report's panel of experts," said Harshini Bartlett, spokesperson from RePower Alice Springs

"RePower Alice Springs is actively planning a community solar project for the town in which renters and others can invest for an attractive financial return, reduced carbon emissions and for the jobs such development will create here," said Harshini Bartlett.

"We call on the Government to support the aims of RePower Alice Springs, action the Roadmap's key recommendations and develop a comprehensive NT climate policy to augment these."

The roadmap can be downloaded at: <https://roadmaptorenewables.nt.gov.au/report>



*Participants at the Community Energy Workshop*

If you would like to get involved with Repower Alice Springs please email us at [repoweralicesprings@gmail.com](mailto:repoweralicesprings@gmail.com) and of course like our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/repoweralicesprings/>

**Harshini Bartlett**  
**Repower Alice Springs Convenor**

## **Alice Springs Community Garden**



**Regular working bees are on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month.**

**[www.alicecommunitygarden.org.au](http://www.alicecommunitygarden.org.au)**

The Alice Springs Community Garden (ASCG) is a member of Gardens for Wildlife and it continues to grow as a site for local fauna to prosper and proliferate. Many varieties of birds and lizards and no doubt a few other wriggly animals (worms) are finding their homes in and around the Garden. Members with a special interest in these beautiful natural aspects of our garden could monitor, record and make them an ongoing feature of the Garden's storyline.

The magnificent rocky hill and land around the Garden has been pretty much overtaken by buffel and couch grass but we do have a great

opportunity to eradicate all these feral weeds and over time enable the local flora to return and to flourish. So there's plenty of scope ahead for willing workers at future Sunday working bees targeting tasks both inside and outside our fence line.

Why do most plots have those letter boxes? Well, firstly to number and identify them, and secondly to further our communication. Thirdly, they're a bit of a talking point and add to the general colour of the Garden. We do hope their value will grow over time as ideas for their use grow. Suggestions appreciated.





One of our biggest challenges as a garden community is to make the holistic value of the Garden at least as big or bigger than the sum of its individual parts. One area that the Committee would love to improve on is the picking of Garden produce for sale at ALEC's Food for Alice stall on Saturday mornings.

We are going to give every plot holder a small red flag and peg to stick in the ground next to the letter box to signal when they are away and/or happy to donate surplus produce to Food for Alice. Donations can improve the health of the Garden, support ALEC, encourage growing locally and help raise funds.

We get 60% of the selling price and the income can make an important contribution to balancing the Garden's books and enabling further exciting projects. Like the letterboxes, we hope the red flags will become a key contributor to a communicating and sharing Community Garden culture.

The Work for the Dole program has been a tremendous boon to the Garden. Ben Wall and the Work For The Dole team has been building the colourful galvanised iron frames around our new plots and incorporating pipe posts that can hold shade structures over summer

Ben is currently rushing to finish off multiple projects before the latest program ends. We are very hopeful that another program will be funded in the New Year with a new supervisor, probably Kim Mackay! Ben will be away in Israel for three months on a Churchill Scholarship studying date and desert farming and we wish him a wonderful time.

Over the past two years, the Garden committee has collaborated with Ben and fully endorsed his work which we've all been so lucky to have benefitted from. Great work Ben and thanks so much to you and all your team members!

Ben has plans for an annual acquisitive sculptural competition for the Garden, commencing next year during the EcoFair in August which should be great! As an added bonus it means he's going to continue to stay involved.

An upcoming major Garden project is the building of an office, kitchen and separate disability toilet next to the Council shade structure. Other smaller but exciting projects will be linked to this work. So although 2017 has been a momentous year for the Garden there should be at least as much to excite and occupy us in 2018.

As the Garden Convenor, it's been my pleasure and privilege to lead a fine committee and to grow our community of gardeners and friends. Please enjoy a marvellous break if it's on your agenda and return refreshed and ready to make the most of the Garden's spirit, senses and experiences in 2018.

Contact [info@alicecommunitygarden](mailto:info@alicecommunitygarden.org.au) if you would to be involved.

**Bruce Simmons**  
**ASCG Convenor**



*Happy ploholders!*

<http://www.alicecommunitygarden.org.au>  
<https://www.facebook.com/AliceCommunityGarden/>



I began working voluntarily for Food for Alice in July this year, after bringing citrus to sell at the farmers market one Saturday morning and finding that help was needed.

Since then, I've been volunteering at the market every Saturday. As well as getting to know Carmel and Alex and learning a bit about ALEC, it's been wonderful maintaining connections with members of the community. Having worked for over 11 years serving the Alice Springs community, it's wonderful to reconnect with many of the same people (and make new friends) over fresh food.

I must admit that I am not a morning person, particularly on a Saturday, and calculating the correct money can be a strain on my limited resources at that hour. It's such a pleasure to be involved in this program, however, for so many reasons, that I continue to forego my sleep-ins and whatever else I used to do on Saturday mornings.

Firstly, there are the suppliers, who arrive with produce picked and grown with love, some with loads of boxes and buckets, some with just a small donation of herbs or greens, some with a child draped on their shoulders or a quirky pet



at their heel (or at large!). Last weekend, a new supplier nicknamed 'Kiki' rode his push bike, pulling his produce in an eski on a makeshift bike cart all the way from Honeymoon Gap!

The majority of customers usually arrive between 9 and 10am, and if there's time, it's great to have a chat. What can I bring? How can I cook that? What on Earth IS that? Share a recipe from Indonesia. Share some seeds.

Recently, I've up-skilled to do the harvest at the community garden before arriving at ALEC. This involves picking vegetables from various plots for the farmers market, and occasionally meeting another ALEC volunteer or community member who springs like a gnome from behind a compost heap to help one find a wheelbarrow or pull up a stubborn leek.

Poking around this glorious garden in the morning freshness and mingling with all these lovely Alice Springsians at the market, I feel I am absorbing knowledge about all things grown in Alice faster than a hungry chicken can gobble up a mulberry! More, please!

**Kate Burbeck**  
**FFA Volunteer**

### Holiday open days

Date	Day	Open/closed
16/12/2017	Saturday	Open
23/12/2017	Saturday	Open
30/12/2017	Saturday	Closed
6/1/2018	Saturday	Open
13/1/2018	Saturday	Closed
20/1/2018	Saturday	Open
27/1/2017	Saturday	Closed
3/2/2017	Saturday	Open

From February Food For Alice is open every Saturday 9am-11am 90 Gap Road. Join the Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/108715702520033/>



# SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

It's been a great year on the science engagement front here at ALEC! Thanks to funding from Inspiring Australia, we've been able to host six events this year as part of the Alice Springs Regional Hub, which aims to engage the Central Australian community with science.

We've tried to include a practical component to all our events, so that we can learn through doing, as we work together to make Alice Springs a smarter and more sustainable place to live.

Our events have included:

- A World Kidney Day film screening and healthy living stalls with local health care providers.
- Running our first Repair Café, with the help of 16 volunteer repairers
- A visit from Dr Bernadette McCabe to speak about the opportunities for generating biogas from organic waste in Alice Springs
- A schools educational day as part of the World Solar Car Challenge at the Desert Knowledge Solar Precinct.
- An open day at the Alice Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant with Power and Water
- A lunchtime seminar on the invisibility of electronic waste in Central Australia with Alice Springs Town Council.

Next year we will deliver a more extensive Inspiring Australia program, including a Renewable Energy Tour, an active transport seminar, our second Repair Café, a women in STEAM workshop and to continue to deliver outreach to schools and young people around science and sustainability. If you are a local scientist or engineer, please make contact if you would like to be involved in an event or have your work promoted.

Thank you for your involvement and support of the Inspiring Australia program this year and we look forward to what the New Year brings.



Volunteer repairer Ben, fixing a broken lava lamp at the Repair Cafe in July.

Rachel O'Leary  
Science Engagement Officer

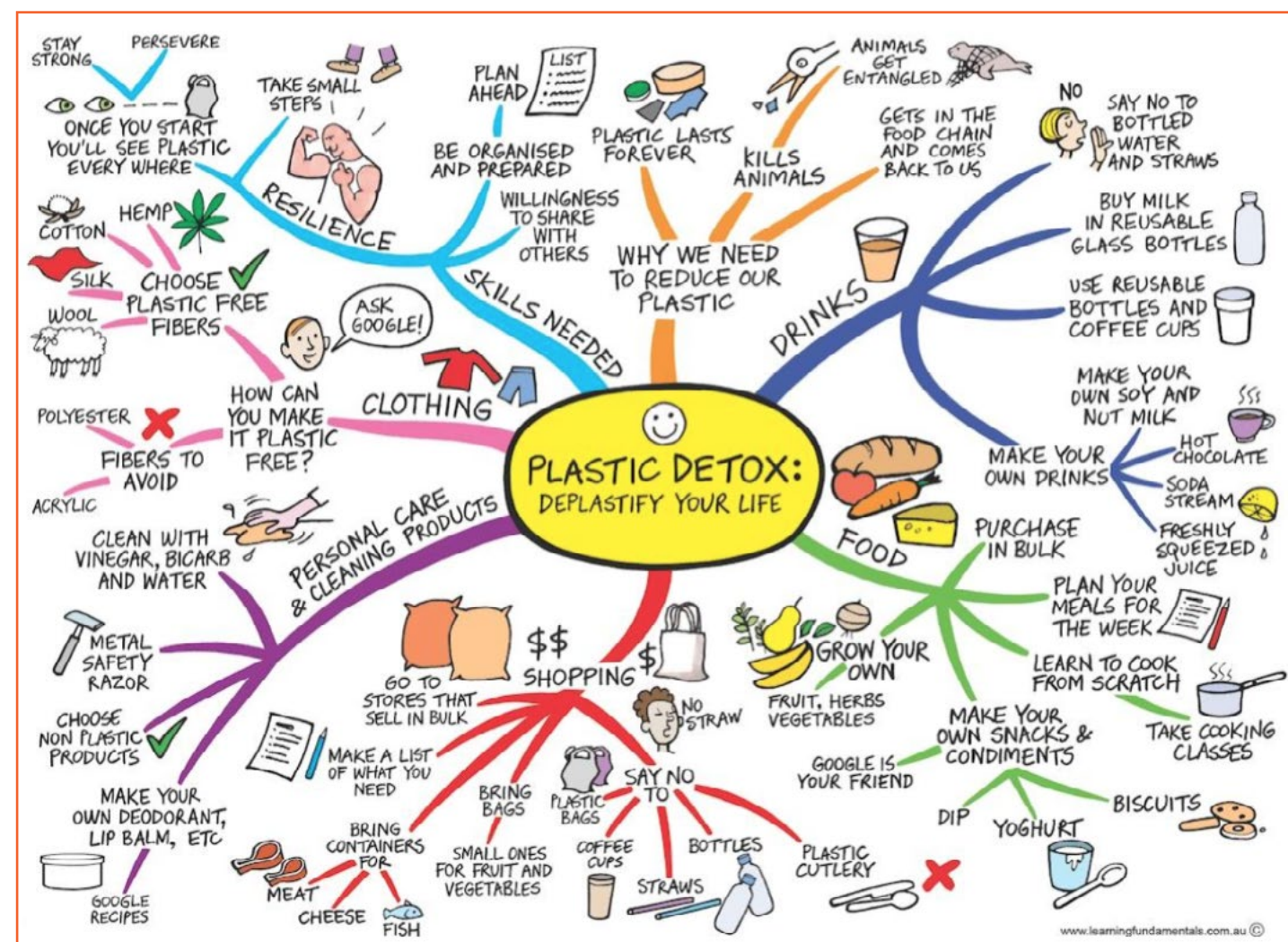
# WASTE FREE NT

Championed by the Environment Centre NT, the aim of the Waste Free NT movement is to reduce waste generated in the Northern Territory.

One of their key projects is to reduce single-use plastic waste at the Parap Markets. Community members are actively encouraged to bring their own containers to the markets. Spare cutlery and a wash basin are also available to anyone who has forgotten to bring their own. So far, community members are responding really

positively, remembering to bring their bowls, cups, in order to reduce their personal waste impact.

You can follow and contribute to the Waste Free NT movement by liking the webpage on Facebook. Next year, Arid Lands Environment Centre hopes to join the movement and showcase what is happening in Alice Springs through the Waste Free NT site <https://www.facebook.com/WastefreeNT/>



## Merry Christmas and a climate action filled 2018





## ALEC Workshop Program

It's been a great first year for me working at the Arid Lands Environment Centre as the Community Engagement Officer. I have facilitated a sustainability workshop series that started in March and it's been booked out every month, which suggests to me that there is a definite shift in our thinking away from fast food, easy options and plastic, plastic, plastic.

The workshop program has been teaching new skills whilst encouraging people to reduce the amount of plastics going into landfill, reducing carbon footprints and actually doing things that save you money.

We started with a workshop on green cleaning and ended with meal planning and making kim chi with everything in between from beeswax wraps to making tofu. It's also been a great way to get out of the house on a Saturday morning and do something fun with other members of the community.

The workshop in November looked at meal planning and ways to save money while eliminating food wastage. As it gets hotter we can look forward to gardens filled with eggplants, basil, zucchini, capsicums and chillies while the supermarkets have these things in bulk on sale

while they're in season.

It is a good idea to buy seasonal produce in bulk and get into the practice of storing foods so that you have them cheaply and on hand during their off season. Make pestos, pickle chillies, roast and jar capsicums, make baba ganoush, chutney, the options are endless. In the long run it will save you time and money and reduce the amount you're putting into landfill. It's a win-win.

As we move into the new year, the workshop series will continue with a whole lot of new and exciting workshops as well as repeats of the ones by popular demand. It's great to see people in the community putting their hand up to become facilitators as well, sharing their skill and talents with everyone.

2018 will include workshops on sauerkraut and kombucha, composting for arid zones, candle making, bush medicine and food preservation among others. We'll be announcing the schedule early in the new year. It's a good idea to become a member also as you get discounts on the workshops, especially if you're wanting to do more than one!

**Laurie May**  
Community Engagement Officer



*Bush Medicine Making Workshop*



*Tofu Making Workshop*

## A Low Waste XMAS

Whilst it's lovely to share time with family and friends at Christmas, how can we keep waste to a minimum during this social time?

With some creative thinking, we can still celebrate the festive season and keep true to the original intent of Christmas, such as giving to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Here are a few ideas from the Arid Lands Environment Centre to:

### **Declutter the home or office before Christmas**

Make way for the new and good! Repackage used toys for a local charity group. Go through your pantry and donate unwanted food to be made into a Christmas hamper.

### **Reduce the people you are buying for**

Do a Kris Kringle within families or offices and just choose one person to buy a gift for. Consider setting a limit on this – either a dollar value, or a home made present, such as a card or desert, is always appreciated.

### **Buy second hand**

Search for treasure in your local opportunity shop. Great fun plus its recycling!

### **Reduce packaging**

If you buy presents online, you can ask the sender to wrap your gift in brown paper rather than packaging it in plastic. Make your own cards or wrap with recycled paper. Send E-cards.

### **Share an experience rather than a gift**

Take your family or workmates on an adventure, to the movies, theatre, bowling, or even a home foot massage voucher, rather than buying more things.

### **Give to charity**

Ask your family or friends to nominate a charity

that they are concerned about and donate to them in lieu of buying a Christmas gift.

### **Make a present**

Handmade gifts are often the most appreciated. They are often one of a kind, and people appreciate the time taken in this busy world.

### **Eat together**

We create less waste when we eat communally, so cook up a feast and invite your neighbours along!

### **Wash your dishes**

Choose to wash plates and cutlery to avoid disposable eating utensils. Pack in a crate and take it back to the office to wash.

Enjoy the festivities!

**Rachel O'Leary**  
Science Engagement Officer





# BEYOND NUCLEAR INITIATIVE

The Beyond Nuclear Initiative (BNI) campaigns on all aspects of the nuclear fuel chain in Australia from uranium mining through to radioactive waste management. The work covers vast geographical areas and also spans generations, with descendents of people impacted by nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s and 1960s still experiencing health effects today.

BNI works closely with campaign groups around the country to share knowledge and resources and strengthen networks. Below are snapshots of some current campaigns identified as priority for the national movement.

## Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (ANFA)

ANFA recently commemorated its twentieth year with a national gathering in Adelaide. The first meeting (April 1997) was initiated by Mirarr Traditional Owners from Kakadu and was held in Alice Springs with support from ALEC and other local groups. BNI has compiled a book examining the formation of this unique network that is due to be released in the next couple of months. Details of how to obtain a copy of this historical document will be sent to ALEC members.

## Nuclear Weapons

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its work to “draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for [our] ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

ICAN was conceived and developed by anti-nuclear activists based in Melbourne but has yet to receive a congratulatory message from the PM Turnbull for this remarkable accolade. The award ceremony is on Sunday December 10 in Norway.



Three sites in South Australia are under consideration for a national radioactive waste facility. The following is an abbreviated version of a paper released November 2017 by David Noonan, Independent Environment Campaigner.

## Nuclear fuel waste: Extended Storage at Lucas Heights or target South Australia?

Since April 2016 the Federal government has solely targeted regional communities in SA for a proposed above ground store to take irradiated Nuclear Fuel Waste (NFW) and long lived Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) from the ANSTO Lucas Heights reactor facility in NSW.

This nuclear waste storage plan compromises safety by importing long lived reactor waste to SA without any waste disposal capacity or even a program or plan for potential disposal of NFW and ILW. Safety requires these nuclear wastes are isolated from the environment for over 10,000 years.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) has produced and stored Nuclear Fuel Waste and ILW at Lucas Heights since the 1950's. The current OPAL reactor operating license was approved by the national regulatory body (ARPANSA) through to 2057 “despite no reactor waste infrastructure long term storage or disposal being in place”.

In 2015 ANSTO purpose-built an “Interim Waste Store” (IWS) at Lucas Heights with a conservative design operating life of 40 years to take reprocessed Nuclear Fuel Wastes from France and from the UK, equivalent to Lucas Heights NFW that had been sent overseas from the previous HIFAR reactor.

The Licence for this NFW Store “is not time-limited” and has a contingency plan to operate for longer than 40 years, potentially to store reprocessed NFW “until the availability of a final disposal option”.

ANSTO's Lucas Heights is by far the best-resourced and most secure facility to responsibly manage the extended storage of Australia's existing nuclear waste and the intended accruals of OPAL reactor NFW and IL waste production through to the 2050's. There is no licensing or technical reason why Lucas Heights cannot conduct extended storage of these nuclear wastes.

This current SA proposal follows on successful campaigns that stopped national nuclear waste dumps in SA and then the NT. It is important that the currently targeted communities are supported to continue building the case for extended interim storage at Lucas Heights and the development of a socially just as well as environmentally responsible plan for managing radioactive wastes. For further information on the national



dump campaign see: <http://archive.foe.org.au/waste> and [www.dontdumpsona.net](http://www.dontdumpsona.net)

WA uranium mine proposals: Spotlight on Yeelirrie

Canadian mining company Cameco is the proponent of the controversial Yeelirrie uranium mine proposal in the Northern Goldfields, on Tjiwarl Native Title determined country. The proposal threatens the area that is part of the Seven Sisters Dreaming songline. The word Yeelirrie translates to the word Yullala – which mean to weep or mourn - and Yeelirrie is referred to as a “place of death”. The cultural stories and connections with Yeelirrie are the primary reason the Traditional Owners are opposed to uranium mining. The project also threatens between three and eleven species of subterranean fauna with extinction.

Over recent years many hundreds of people have visited the Yeelirrie site with Traditional Owners to support the local opposition to the mine. The first Walkatjurra Walkabout was held in 2011 – a walk from Wiluna to Perth over three months. The walk was to demonstrate the opposition to uranium mining but had many other positive impacts in the local community. Smaller walks have been held every year since 2011 from Wiluna to Leonora via the proposed uranium mine at Yeelirrie.

The walks are led by the Walkatjurra rangers from Leonora and have involved people from across Australia and many countries including the USA, Taiwan, Japan, France, Lapland, Greece and England.

You can watch the trailer for the film Walking for Country by Iranian film maker Reza Nezamdoust <https://vimeo.com/162028825>



Natalie Wasley  
BNI Campaigner

<http://beyondnuclearinitiative.com>



## desertSMART EcoFair a Success

desertSMART EcoFair is in its ninth year and was organised by the Arid Lands Environment Centre, as part of National Science Week in August. EcoFair aims to educate, inspire and activate the community around science and sustainability issues.

In 2017 special guests included Associate Professor Bernadette McCabe (National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture, University of Southern Queensland), Science Communicator Giles Parkinson (Renew Economy) and desertSMART EcoFair ambassador Costa Georgiadis (Gardening Australia).

The Eco-Science Schools Day 2017 was held in the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens and was a great success, with 300 Alice Springs students participating from nine different schools, including a remote community school. Workshops included health, climate change, land management, feral pest management, recycling, engineering, biodiversity, water conservation, mining impacts, and science and sustainability.

The Great Science Quiz was again a popular feature of the 783 ABC Outside broadcast from the Bean Tree Café at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, and more than 300 people attended the Alice Springs Bicycle Film Festival, which featured international and local films about the humble bicycle - the quirky film "Magpie" winning the popular choice award.

An influx of fantastic local produce and a visit by Costa Georgiadis made for a special Food for Alice and there was high demand for the Bush Medicine workshop facilitated by Purple House, Western Desert Dialysis.

The Garden to Plate event, held at the Alice Springs Community Garden was a great success, with over 100 people learning about

gardening, sustainability and health amidst the vibrancy of the community gardens. The event featured: Green thumbs with Costa Georgiadis, Science at Sunset with Associate Professor Bernadette McCabe, and the Bush Wok Cook-Off with Rayleen Price from Kungas Can Cook and nutritionist Roy Price.

More than 600 people attended the Sustainable Living Festival at Snow Kenna Park and enjoyed panels, feature presentations, workshops and the community eco-market.

Two panels were delivered on the day, including Learn to Live desertSMART which suggested practical ways to make a difference to daily living by local experts in the fields of water, energy, waste and gardening. The second panel was titled Excellent Adventures: Sustaining tourism in Central Australia and reflect 2017 being the International Year of Sustainable Tourism. The feature presentation was by Giles Parkinson from Renew Economy and explored the rapidly advancing renewable energy technologies and how they are being integrated into the energy mix in communities across Australia.

Workshops included community-owned solar, closing the loop on food waste in Alice Springs, and on making bee-friendly gardens.



Eco-Science Schools Day electronic waste workshop

## The ALEC Board

ALEC would like to acknowledge our elected board, with both new and returning members. The Board was elected at the November AGM.

Chair: Jodi Lennox  
Vice Chair: Stewart Baillie  
Secretary: Barb Molanus  
Treasurer: Jocelyn Davies  
Ordinary members: Rosalie Schultz, Simon Cheers, Tim Brand, Liz Moore, Brenda Shields.

The role of the Board is to review and monitor ALEC's work and achievements to ensure that ALEC is:

- achieving its objectives
- meeting its legal and regulatory obligations
- develop appropriate strategy and policy

The work of ALEC's volunteer Board is integral to the success of ALEC, and we look forward to strong governance to help ALEC achieve its vision of healthy futures for Arid Lands.



ALEC AGM 2017



ALEC Treasurer Jocelyn Davies at the AGM



***In line with the Arid Lands Environment Centre's (ALEC) vision of 'healthy futures for arid lands and people' ALEC supports the rights of all people regardless of sexuality and gender to marry.***

***Healthy communities are resilient, fair and inclusive and ALEC sees marriage equality as an important step forward in a more sustainable future. We acknowledge the historic YES vote for marriage equality and we look forward to it becoming Australian law.***



# COP 23: three ways cities are leading the fight against climate change

The global population is predicted to rise to 10 billion by 2050, and the majority of those people will live in cities. Given that cities already account for 75% of the world's energy use and 76% of carbon dioxide emissions, there's a growing focus on how urban planning and design can reduce emissions and help humanity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Representatives of the world's global powers have gathered in Bonn to attend the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change – more pithily known as COP 23.

Working together to affect large-scale change has been the key message of the conference. There has been a groundswell of urban innovation on show, largely driven by the mayors and governors of cities and regions, as well as industry leaders and universities interested in promoting opportunities for greener growth.

These bodies have formed alliances and networks to develop ideas and strategies around smart mobility, renewable energy, living infrastructure and sustainable urban design. This has been the good news story of COP 23. The conference has given nation states a unique opportunity to work more closely with cities, to plan for climate change.

## 1. Low-carbon precincts

One aim is for current and future cities to be powered by 100% renewable electricity. This can be achieved with a combination of renewable energy sources such as wind, solar or hydro, with battery storage and microgrids integrating with national grids as needed.

Cities will have integrated transport systems with

electric-powered light rail and personal vehicles, while promoting active travel such as walking and cycling. Designing for integrated green precincts will bring greater benefits for local communities than one green building at a time. For example, community recycling and solar programs are more feasible on a larger precinct scale.

Of course, there are challenges to overcome. Finding appropriate locations for renewable energy farms that are also acceptable to the local people requires careful consideration of design guidelines and community engagement in the decision-making process.

The ICLEI 100% Renewable Cities Network is a prime example of the work being done to achieve this, by connecting cities to share knowledge and support each other. The network includes cities such as Canberra, the Australian capital, which is on track to achieve its target of 100% renewable electricity by 2020.

## 2. Living infrastructure

Cities across the world are increasingly incorporating living infrastructure, to deliver social, environmental and economic services to urban communities. This is done by integrating trees, shrubs, grass and open spaces (green infrastructure); rainscapes and waterways (blue infrastructure); and soils, surface and man-made structures (grey infrastructure) into the fabric of the city.

In China's "sponge cities", rooftop gardens help to capture storm water and regulate the temperature of the building. Copenhagen's cloudburst plan rethinks the way water flows through the city by installing channels above and beneath the surface to prevent flooding. And water sensitive urban design is being put to use

in drier cities, to make efficient use of everything from rainwater to waste water.

Living infrastructure also offers nature-based solutions for coastal cities under increasing threat from rising sea levels and more extreme coastal storms. For instance, replanting mangroves and coastal vegetation provides softer barriers between land and sea, while restoring natural waterways by removing dams and man-made canal systems can reduce the urban heat island effect and mitigate its negative impacts on human health.

## 3. Urban networks

Urban networks make use of digital connectivity and the internet of things to help cities far and wide work toward global goals: think everything from integrated green transport systems, to big data for improving resource efficiency, to innovative platforms for exchanging knowledge and practices between cities, towns and villages.

Organisations such as the C40, ICLEI and the Global Covenant of Mayors are already helping to coordinate action between city leaders – and at COP 23 the Climate Summit of Local and Regional Leaders adopted the Bonn Fiji Commitment to deliver the Paris Agreement at all levels. Built environment professionals from around the world are also joining the groundswell of urban action, launching the Planners for Climate Action group this week at COP 23.

It's also critical that the people making decisions in cities can connect with researchers who are gathering evidence in this area. Two global examples I am actively involved with are the Urban Climate Change Research Network led by Columbia University, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs.

## Making it happen

Sustainable solutions such as these need green financing mechanisms and support from national

governments if they are to deliver real outcomes on the ground. At COP 23, the World Bank unveiled a new programme designed to provide cities with a vehicle to raise necessary funding and investment, in partnership with private enterprise.

In one of the conference's key finance sessions, the former leader of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figueres, stressed that green finance will be the key to urban change, with a current industry target of \$US1 trillion, and more in green bonds by 2020.

Nation states now have a responsibility to enable this wave of urban innovation to move forward. Despite the growing power of city and regional governments, national urban policies still play a central role in carrying out international agendas such as the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

While a few states may choose to ignore international agreements, this groundswell of collaborative action across businesses, governments and communities is sending a strong message that national governments would be wise to heed. Embracing and investing in urban transformation that improves the health of people and the planet is clearly a winning strategy.

Article reprinted from:

<https://theconversation.com/cop-23-three-ways-cities-are-leading-the-fight-against-climate-change-87277>

CLIMATE ACTION  
NOW



# NO TO FRACKING!

FRACKING MONEY COMES AND GOES

WATER & HEALTH TOO PRECIOUS TO RISK



LAND & ECOSYSTEMS TOO PRECIOUS TO



SACRIFICE



BILBYS, NT

Image by Yoanna Mynah



## Support the work of the Arid Lands Environment Centre

For more than 36 years ALEC has been standing up for the outback and catalysing change in the arid lands. With unprecedented threats facing the NT environment we need your support.

### Can you help?

#### Become an ALEC 100 member:

Donate \$100 a month each year, or contribute a one off \$1000 tax deductible donation. 100 supporters will provide the ongoing essential operating funds of ALEC. [https://aridlands.nationbuilder.com/desert\\_defenders](https://aridlands.nationbuilder.com/desert_defenders)

#### Become a Desert Defender:

Desert Defenders give monthly or one off tax deductible donations that provide critical funds to support ALEC programs and campaigns.

[https://aridlands.nationbuilder.com/desert\\_defenders](https://aridlands.nationbuilder.com/desert_defenders)

#### 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://www.alec.org.au/become\\_a\\_member](http://www.alec.org.au/become_a_member)

Donate at [www.alec.org.au](http://www.alec.org.au)



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