

TOTAL ENVIRONMENT NEWS



2012 / ISSUE 2

Good Green Tape

I decided to wait until 1 July to write this editorial so we could start off on a bright note. The carbon tax is here.

Whether or not an Abbot government succeeds in dismantling it – the coming months will prove that it's not a scary economic destabiliser. It's disappointing that it has become such a polarised issue but next time we have the debate there will be no credibility in the financial scare case. Also over coming months we will see business change practices and there will be a multitude of examples of how to become low carbon.

Another bright turn of events is that finally the mainstream media are giving more attention to the real cause of ever increasing electricity prices – excessive network costs and meager attention to energy efficiency. TEC has been banging on about this for years.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the gold plating of the power system by utilities that financially gain from building Big Stuff, insulated from rigorous regulatory oversight by a set of National Electricity Market rules that are full of loopholes. Now even the regulators are complaining and conservative energy ministers are talking about deferring the (unnecessary) infrastructure works.

It's also of great note that electricity consumption is reducing due to the significant influence of consumer efficiency responses and solar PV. And the economy is still growing. So we really can have zero carbon power, save on usage - and stop increasing power bills.

Nevertheless the old economy has been fighting back with a push to dismantle environmental laws at the federal and state levels. The attack on green tape is reminiscent of the last time the miners and developers thought the green movement was becoming too influential. This was during the 1980s when the ALP discovered the power of the green vote via second-preference vote strategies.

Now with the Federal Government needing Green support in the lower and upper houses - the miners, emboldened by their booming investments and campaign against the mining tax, and developers who have been lusting over radical changes to planning law – decided to take action. They convinced state and federal governments to get rid of green tape.

This is code for removing legitimate community consultation: quality environmental assessment and essential oversight by the feds when it comes to nationally important sites. When you read their manifesto it only focusses on fast tracking of approvals, not how to construct a robust and credible decision system – which may at times say NO.

Of course industry overreached themselves and pretty quickly there was a stark demonstration of why you need better standards and federal involvement with the proliferating port and dredging plans for Queensland mining developments. To his credit environment minister Tony Burke stood his ground and worked to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

In New South Wales we are going to have a new planning act. Undoubtedly the previous government had brought it into disrepute. But the same vested interests are wanting less community consultation and reduced environmental controls. The new Act will have a long ranging influence on the condition of the environment. That's why we are pressing hard to effectively integrate environment protection and community consultation. We've drafted a Public Participation Charter which should have legislative force- see inside this Newsletter.

Jeff Angel, Executive Director

Contents

2012 Issue 2

| | |
|---|---|
| Editorial | 1 |
| 40 year campaign nears a climax | 2 |
| What next for Sydney? | 3 |
| Electricity prices – it's not the carbon tax! | 3 |
| Energy Stars Go Gold | 4 |
| Making Green Shopping Easier | 5 |
| Putting the community back into planning | 6 |

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40 year campaign nears a climax

By *Lisa Wriley*, Waste Campaigner

Yes it's been almost 40 years since Australia had a container deposit system. There have been several attempts to resuscitate a CDS since then and in August we will see the climax of the most recent (10 year) push. The community campaign keeps growing.

On Earth Day, Sunday 22 April, the Manly Environment Centre crew donned bottle costumes. We wrangled an 8 billion wasted bottle banner, six 'giant litter' inflatable coke bottles, various signs with slogans including stop litter before it hits the ground and turning rubbish into community money. We posed for a photo shoot, before walking through the streets of Manly to the Manly Food Co-op's 15th birthday party. We definitely turned some heads. People asked for information and how they could support the campaign. We gave out postcards and wallet cards with the Boomerang Alliance website address.

One week later, the Cooks River community under the leadership of Cooks River Valley Association, hosted a Cash for Containers event. We offered refunds on bottles and cans, a chance to build a bottle boat and hosted a visit from the Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke, and the venerable historic explorer, Captain Cook.

"Who is responsible for this disgusting object?" boomed Captain Cook as he held up a bottle, clearly shocked at the amount of rubbish floating in the river that still bears his name.

Cook listened as members of the community, including a Mud Crab volunteer, told him of the thousands of bottles that they remove from the river every year. He praised the good people for the work they do for the river and lamented that so many plastic bottles were entering the river in the first place.

TEC's tireless campaigner, Bev the Bottle, lost no time in assuring both Captain Cook and the gathered crowd that there is a solution – a container deposit system: "all we need is to collect a 10c deposit from the people who buy me, and give it back when I am returned for recycling. Then I will have value and I won't be left lying around as litter any more!"

Captain Cook challenged Tony Burke to bring about the changes in legislation that will clean up the waterways "for the benefit of all who live here, and their children, and their children's children". Tony Burke then faced the media and spoke eloquently of the problems faced by rivers such as the Cooks River, and the opportunity for Environment Ministers to endorse a CDS at their next meeting (on 24 August). The crowd of 500 chanted "Yes to CDS".

TEC Director, Jeff Angel addressing the recent Canberra Rally



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WHAT NEXT FOR SYDNEY?

Leigh Martin, Urban Campaigner analyses new plans for the future...are they clever enough?

With rapid population growth placing ever growing stress on Sydney's environment and infrastructure, the need for careful planning is clear. Decisions made now will have implications for Sydney's environment, and the quality of life of its inhabitants, for decades to come.

It is in this context that the NSW Government has released a discussion paper, Sydney over the next 20 years as the first step toward developing a new Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney. First indications are that this strategy will fall well short of what is required.

The new strategy will replace the existing Metropolitan Strategy, a key feature of which is reducing urban sprawl, and concentrating population growth around major public transport nodes. Disturbingly, the discussion paper appears to be canvassing a return to uncontained urban sprawl. It states that the "Government needs to address the delivery of new housing in greenfield areas," and proposes a return to a mix of residential development in existing urban and greenfield areas, last seen over a decade ago.

The discussion paper notes that Sydney's access to locally

produced food and safe drinking water is under pressure from the city's expanding urban footprint. It is not clear how maintaining access to local food production and clean drinking water will be reconciled with increased greenfield residential development.

Little detail is provided on how public transport and other infrastructure will be developed to service population growth. The Government is presently developing another strategy, the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan. Details are sketchy, with the plan having only reached the discussion paper stage. While options are presented, there are few clear targets or timelines.

The Metropolitan Strategy discussion paper also opens the door to coal seam gas development in the Sydney Basin. Tellingly, CSG is specifically listed as an aspect of mining whose "interaction" with other land uses will need to be managed.

Sydney needs a comprehensive strategy to protect its precious environmental heritage, and maintain quality of life for its residents. On present indications, the new Metropolitan Strategy will do neither.

Electricity prices – it's not the carbon tax!

Your electricity is costing an arm, and a leg. TEC's Energy Market Advocate, Mark Byrne explains why...

TEC has been campaigning since 2005 for more action to improve the environmental performance of the National Electricity Network. De-centralised energy not only reduces the environmental impacts of the grid, but also helps to keep retail prices down, as it is usually cheaper than building big new power stations and upgrading the network. All it takes is a little energy efficiency, peak demand reduction, and support for small and medium scale renewable energy.

Our rapidly rising household power bills are largely the result of building more poles, wires and substations. These are necessary, so the argument goes, to cover rising peak demand, driven above all in recent years by more home air conditioners. In 2011 there were eight million of them across Australia, double the number seven years earlier. That increase in demand is equivalent to the output of eight big coal-fired power stations. But the impact on peak demand is even more problematic. According to the federal government's Draft Energy White Paper, a new 2kW reverse-cycle air conditioner costing around \$1200 to buy

requires about \$7000 of extra network infrastructure to run in peak periods.

Overall electricity demand, on the other hand, has been decreasing for the last three years, for a variety of reasons — the GFC, cooler summers, more efficient appliances, and so on. The trick is to smooth out the peaks so there isn't so much expensive infrastructure lying idle most of the time. That's where de-centralised energy — or "demand side participation," in the jargon of the market — comes in.

Despite having decided in 2010 that there were no material barriers to more DSP in the NEM, the Australian Energy Market Commission is nevertheless currently undertaking a review of what could be done to increase the amount of de-centralised energy in the market. It will produce a final report by October for submission to the Ministerial Standing Committee on Energy and Resources, which will then direct it to make the necessary changes to the National Electricity Rules.

continued on page 4

ENERGY STARS GO GOLD

TEC's dogged work on greening urban office buildings has paid off

We have been working on improving the energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions of office buildings, since 2006. In two innovative projects we collaborated with the owners of major buildings from grade A to D.

A standout success of the prestige building component was the diversified property trust, GPT, which could see the issue of greenhouse emissions was not going away, that energy costs would continue to increase and that to hedge against building obsolescence, a determined energy efficiency program with a courageous target was needed. Their portfolio stood at NABERS (National Australian Built Environment Rating System) 2.38 stars with an aim to achieve 4.5 stars. Back in 2007, GPT signed an agreement with TEC to improve 27 buildings, from Australia Square to Melbourne Central to the Riverside Centre in Brisbane.

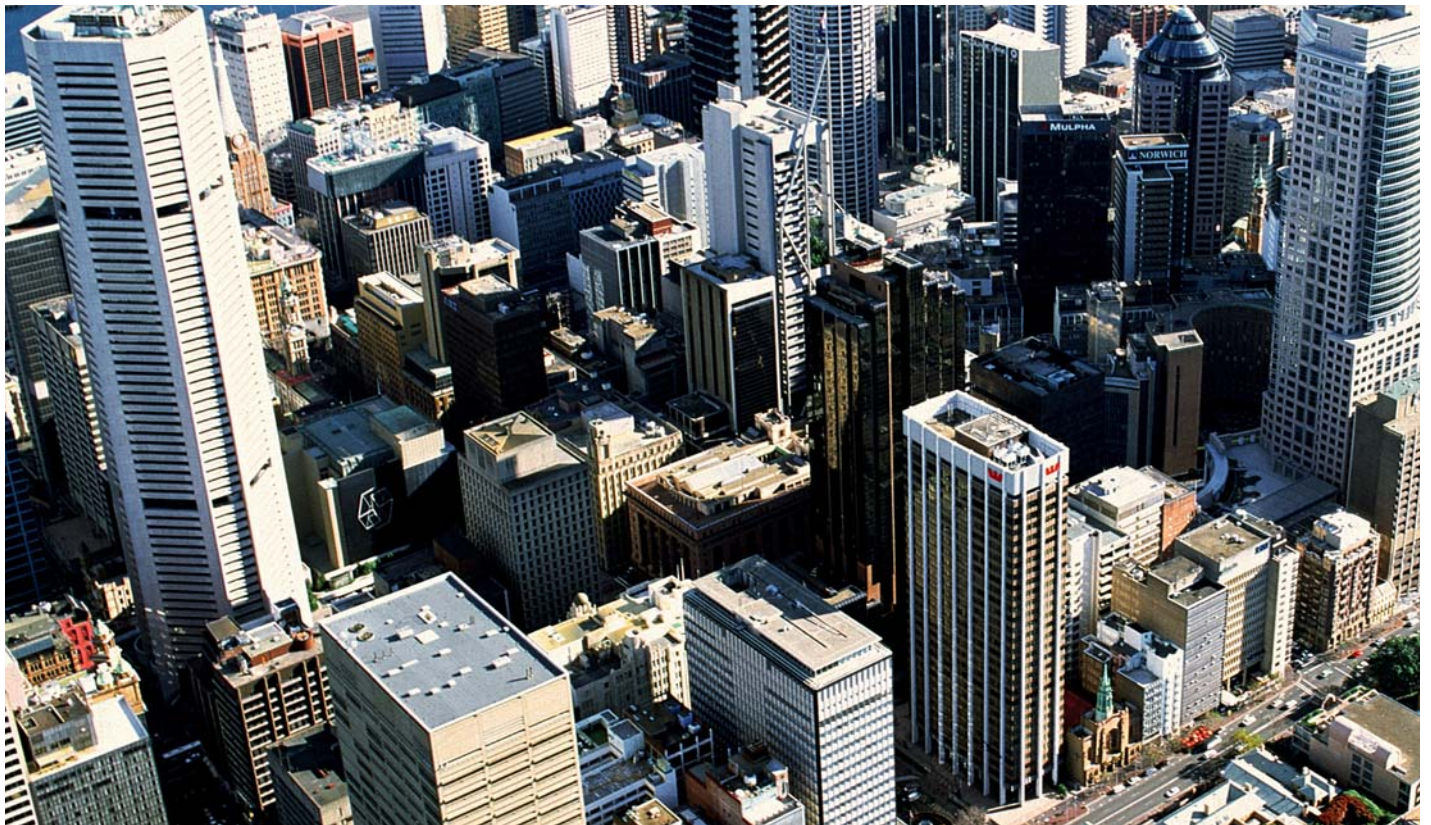
We can now report that the objective has been met, with the portfolio reaching 4.6 stars (with GreenPower the portfolio averages 5.0 stars, website to be updated

shortly). Many millions of dollars have been saved on energy bills in the meantime, with savings of course continuing to escalate with the cost of electricity. Greenhouse emissions across the business are down 36% against 2005 baseline.

<http://www.gpt.com.au/content.aspx?urlkey=Energy>

Our second project on lower grade office buildings has just been completed. Researcher Matt Fisher investigated six case studies in the Sydney CBD, North Sydney and Parramatta. The lessons from upgrading their energy use (eg from faulty aircon, lack of monitoring and management) were detailed and two successful forums held in the CBD and Parramatta. Link to the report: http://www.greencapital.org.au/images/Events/Building_Project/lessons%20and%20tools%20from%20leaders%20-%20final%20report%202012.pdf

Finally, TEC has also had its office rated according to NABERS, and we achieved 6 stars!



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continued from page 3

TEC is part of a coalition of de-centralised energy advocates that is calling on the AEMC to introduce a series of major reforms including better incentives for networks to look at alternatives to building more poles and wires, and greater flexibility at the customer end. This would, for instance, allow electric cars (which draw a lot of power, but also store it for potential sale into the grid at peaks), to be metered separately.

Whether or not it adopts all of our recommendations, the AEMC gives the impression that it is finally taking the problem seriously and will recommend some real reforms. If all goes well, we should see some changes within two years that will help to keep a lid on retail prices while also reducing greenhouse emissions. Having felt like we were banging our heads against a proverbial brick wall for years on this issue, it is pleasing to see that TEC's work is finally bearing fruit.

Making Green Shopping Easier

It's a jungle out there! Murray Hogarth, our Green Capital Senior Adviser tells us how we are analysing eco-labeling



For most of us, complexity and competing priorities make green purchasing decisions difficult, and also heighten concerns about being tricked, or greenwashed into buying products that aren't as green as they say they are.

So, is there some way to cut through and make it simple, or at least easier to decide?

That's the core objective of Green Capital's Buying Better project, which is moving into the final stage of its current phase and will be completed by the end of August.

Buying Better has designed a simple version of a typical 'life cycle' and is applying it to several major product areas to identify the 'most material' environmental issues. In the next phase it will make recommendations on how this information can best be communicated to consumers and business procurement professionals.

The test product areas are:

- Printer Paper
- Meat and Dairy (primarily beef)
- Cleaning products (laundry detergents and general purpose cleaners)
- Small electronics

The work on these accelerated in May, and included a series of stakeholder workshops in Sydney and Melbourne, with about 65 representatives from over 50 businesses, industry

associations, consultancies, 'eco-label' organisations, environment groups, government agencies, researchers and others attending.

As a result of the extensive feedback received through the workshops, related events, submissions and ongoing engagement, additional time is being spent on completing the final analysis and reporting stage of Buying Better.

The preliminary 'most material issue' assessments for the four product areas are:

Printer Paper - The raw materials extraction and processing stage is most material for printer paper, following by the paper manufacturing process. Of greatest significance are the forests where virgin pulp is sourced from - and therefore the opportunity to use more recycled paper, even if that comes at an upfront 'carbon cost' - and also to source virgin pulp from sustainably managed forests.

Meat & Dairy - For beef 'materiality' is first and foremost about the critical productive resource, the sustainability of the land itself i.e. the raw materials extraction stage as it applies to the pastoral sector. Second is the consumer use stage, where waste of food (including meat and dairy) is widely recognised as an environmental problem, and where consumer choice plays a major role in the level of consumption and the

types of products that are most in demand.

Cleaning products - Our preliminary view is that product design is the most material area, with the second being use by the consumer. In considering many products in this sector, the Buying Better project has concentrated on laundry detergents and general-purpose cleaners - with our analysis dividing them up into the 'clearly useful' and the 'question marks'. There may be opportunities for a more holistic approach including total cycle management of clothing, covering everything from detergent manufacturers, to machine makers, to fashion designers and textile producers; and a healthy home environment approach that is much more than a daily battle between chemicals and 'bugs'.

Small electronics - The end of life/start of new life/ stage of the life cycle is the most material for small electronics, followed by product design. This is an especially challenging area. All of the digital gadgets we so love are creating a tsunami of future e-waste. There are a relatively small number of giant global producers, none of them based in Australia, so our market tends to be a 'taker' of whatever environmental standards are decreed from abroad.

For more information on Buying Better, see the Green Capital website: www.greencapital.org.au

Putting the community back into planning

*As part of a major project on a NSW planning act with the **Environment Defenders Office** and **Nature Conservation Council**, **TEC** has prepared a **Public Participation Charter** which we have recommended should have legislative force. The new Act will be finalised by the O'Farrell government in coming months.*

- 1 It is recognised that the community expects and has a right to participate in plan making, development assessment and related decisions. As a consequence these principles will be implemented in good faith and community participation methods should go beyond the minimum standards in the legislation.
- 2 Community participation should be undertaken independently of the proponent and facilitated to ensure its processes and results have credibility.
- 3 The decision maker should recognise the diversity of interests and specifically identify and tailor information for:
 - those individuals and organisations likely to have an interest in the proposal including those who may be directly impacted,
 - those likely to have an interest in the local and regional implications of the project, and
 - those organisations with a state or national interest.
- 4 Notification and participation opportunities should not be impeded by the timing, location and style, for example avoid holiday periods or sites not near public transport.
- 5 The information provided should be transparent, accurate and easy to understand via a variety of methods including letters, social media, websites and events.
- 6 Participation is not simply the passive supply of information but seeks to encourage and record views and engage informed opinion. Methods of engagement include surveys, submissions, drop-in centres, community group and local meetings, and briefings with key organisations. Providing feedback will also encourage the further development of views towards possible alternatives and solutions.
- 7 Assistance is provided to the community and those with limited resources to interrogate and understand complex information. For example by the provision of funds to obtain independent advice; meetings with panels of experts; or commissioning of further research by consent authorities and made public prior to a decision.
- 8 Facilitate dialogue to bring together recognised representatives of stakeholders to allow the opportunity to devise solutions on a level playing field.
- 9 A public report outlining the issues and responses and further research undertaken, is made available prior to the decision.
- 10 It is recognised that the community should be re-engaged with respect to amendments to a proposal (other than minor amendments), rather than rely on existing information.
- 11 Community engagement strategies (general or project specific) will be evaluated according to pre-set key performance indicators such as range of groups contacted; surveys of satisfaction with information provided and engagement methods; accurate recording of views; accessibility of information and events





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(evening)

Please send me regular email updates to

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**The Administrator
Total Environment Centre Inc
Suite 2, 89 Jones Street Ultimo. 2007**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

TEC and the environmental battle can be greatly assisted with your volunteer time and skills.

If you can help, please return this coupon to:

Volunteers Coordinator,
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Suite 2, 89 Jones Street Ultimo. 2007**

I would like to volunteer to help TEC with:

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My previous work has been

My qualifications / skills are.....

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My environmental interests are.....

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I am available (per week) half day one day

occasionally other

Name:

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.....Postcode:

Date:

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Phone: (day).....(evening).....

Consider a Bequest

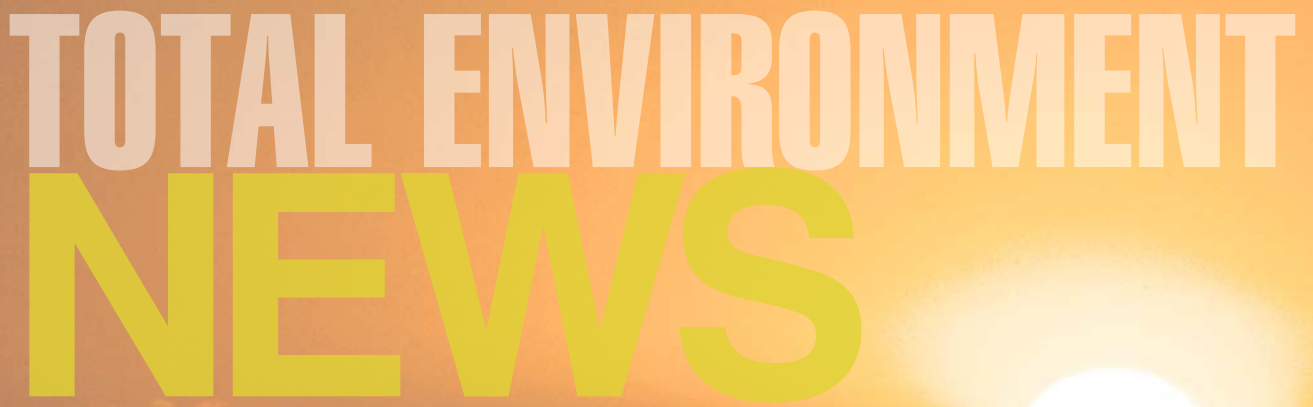
Please remember TEC in your will. The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$..... to TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of Total Environment Centre Inc. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to Total Environment Centre Inc."

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