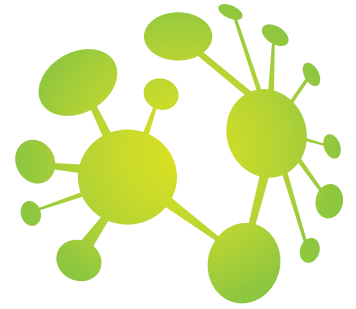


TOTAL ENVIRONMENT NEWS



2013 / ISSUE 3

for the future

This is just the beginning...



Even though Tony Abbott won the election, the environment movement is not going to sulk in the corner. No doubt some people will be a bit depressed fearing what is to come as the fossil fuel industry, extreme rural interests and allied conservative think tanks, press their agendas.

Does any of this mean that the strongly felt desire by the vast majority of the community to protect the environment and embrace a clean energy future will suddenly disappear? Of course not. In an election where the environment barely rated a mention, the "mandate" does not expunge vital and urgent issues requiring effective responses.

We don't stand still – we continue campaigning. And as the new government seeks to remove an important policy or protective law – it will be met by vigorous debate and challenges about what are they going to do about the problem that was targeted in the first place. The replacement policies and actions will be subject to ongoing scrutiny. If a government seeks to act on an issue, then it owns the consequences of that action.

Direct Action? OK, so they allocate funding and are tested against what's needed. Abbott has already said they won't increase funds if the 5% by 2020 target is not met. So then we get into a debate about the latest even more alarming scientific evidence on global warming. The ALP's environment minister has said they will uphold their

commitment to an emissions trading scheme in Opposition despite the Coalition's 'we have a mandate' for repeal argument. While emissions trading is an essential long term changer for business decisions on energy consumption and pollution, these competing policies are not the only game in town over the next two electoral cycles.

No doubt energy efficiency measures will continue to roll out – whether from state or national government policy or market forces. Interestingly the NSW government's recent Energy Efficiency Action Plan, which proposes a range of 2020 targets in concert with the 20% renewable energy goal, lead to cancelling of predicted generation growth and a reduction in coal's share of generation. And National Electricity Market arrangements are under concerted review to improve efficiency. Overall, energy saving is cheaper than Direct Action emissions reductions and better for business and productivity.

So consistent with not standing still, Total Environment Centre's Green Capital program held 'Power Games', less than a week after the federal election. Our panel included John Connor of the Climate Institute, Tim Nelson from AGL Energy, Norton Rose climate lawyer Elisa de Wit, and Renew Economy's Giles Parkinson. It's the beginning of the move to adjust our perspectives and tactics as quickly as possible to ensure the environment and climate change stay on the active government and public agenda.

TEC is also developing a 2 year campaign to protect the laws that protect nature. With the wholesale review of the

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Native Vegetation and Threatened Species Conservation Acts in NSW, and federal moves to weaken environmental approval laws in favour of (even weaker) state based processes – there are significant dangers ahead.

The environment movement must elevate the plight of our fellow species on the community's agenda. The laws were passed to give nature a voice – even though, at this stage of legal evolution that voice is muted against the demands of primitive economic growth. What we need is a conglomerate of protective laws and robust environmental assessment that drives economic activity towards environmental excellence. In recent months we've seen the roar of the dinosaurs, particularly from the mining industry that wants every mine approved whatever its impacts and property developers who think community consultation is

'rubbish'. The public needs to tell them their type of development is not wanted and politicians need a refresher course on what the community values and our inter-generational obligations.

We argue that you can leverage off the times when the pendulum swings back to anti-environment protection policy. This is long standing experience over the last 50 years of environmental battle. Quite a few environmental NGOs are reaching their half century birthdays. You don't survive that long without deep and substantial community support and learning the lessons of sustained campaigning.

**Jeff Angel, Executive Director,
Total Environment Centre and Green Capital**

UP IN SMOKE!

*The NSW Government wants to burn forests for power, reports TEC's natural areas campaigner, **Dave Burgess***

The NSW Government has set about overturning a decade old ban on the burning of native forests to generate electricity. This alarming development comes amid unprecedented attacks on environmental protection laws and as a direct result of pressure applied by the NSW Forest Products Association responding to a declining and unsustainable woodchip market; and farmers who want to clear native bush.

If introduced, the O'Farrell Government's draft Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Native Forest Bio-material) Regulation 2013 will essentially allow any tree not classed as a sawlog to be burned for electricity. This could take place in areas approved for the logging of woodchips, as well as vegetation on private land that has been approved for clearing and offcuts and waste from logging operations. This is particularly concerning when the current weakening of Native Vegetation laws is taken into account.

The logging industry's last attempt in 2002 to burn forests to generate power quickly became known as 'dead koala electricity' and was met with



“burning native forest will endanger ecological communities”



widespread rejection both by consumers and energy providers concerned about the industry's environmental credentials.

Burning forests for power produces greater greenhouse gas emissions than coal or gas when emissions occurring as a result of logging are taken into account. Alongside this, the industry's claims that only 'waste' from logging operations would be used cannot be believed as it is quite simply too labour intensive to collect waste from the forest floor. Burning native forest materials for power would increase potential revenue and instead increase logging, threatening the survival of endangered species and ecological communities.

TEC has contacted all of the state's energy retailers and providers asking them to publicly commit to refrain from using timber sourced from our native forests. Their GreenPower credentials will be under a serious cloud should they add wood from native forests into their energy mix.

Virtual Energy

Mark Byrne, TEC's Energy Advocate reports on a plan to democratise the grid

One of the things that put the kybosh on the City of Sydney's ambitious trigeneration masterplan was the fact that even if energy was being supplied from a gas plant in the basement of one building to the building right next door, the customer would have had to pay the full network charges for that energy. Why, argued the City, should it have to pay for all those poles and wires? Shouldn't they only have to pay what it would cost to run a private wire from one building to the other?

This is one problem that needs solving – and there is another angle too. TEC is part of a group establishing a peak body for community energy projects – mostly small scale PV arrays and wind farms. These projects currently rely on supporters becoming shareholders, instead of benefitting directly from the energy exported to the grid. The group has to try to sell the energy in bulk to a retailer, most of whom aren't interested and therefore only give a small price for the exported energy (around 6

cents per kilowatt hour). This means that community energy projects are often financially unviable.

The answer to both the City of Sydney and the renewable energy groups' needs – and also to the needs of housing tenants unable to put their own PV systems on the buildings they live in – is virtual net metering. It means basically that the energy exported to the grid can be split and credited to the bills of the customers who supported the renewable installation; and they don't have to pay for the whole network.

Sounds simple, and it can happen in theory now, but it doesn't because networks and retailers aren't interested. So TEC and other groups are looking at embarking on the long and rocky road of a change to the National Electricity Rules to require networks to come to the party.

The trickiest part will be the calculation of what level of discount to standard network charges should apply to

projects where energy is generated and consumed within the same substation area. In some US states, formulas are applied such as a flat discount or free access to the local grid. We won't be asking for the latter because it's not fair that some users subsidise others.

But we will be asking for a simple formula that can be easily understood and applied across the grid. This is going to require some close calculation of the components of network charges. Once we have those figures from energy economists, we can start the rule change process, which can take two years.

If we can ensure that the proposal isn't watered down, it'll be worth the wait. While it's not shiny and sexy like a big new wind or solar farm, this is the sort of reform that can make renewable energy projects more financially viable, while also allowing many more people to see the benefits in lower bills.

Broken Promises

*New mining laws are a joke, says **Dave Burgess**, but no-one is laughing...*

The promises that helped the Coalition into government in NSW - about balance and public involvement in planning - have been rendered almost laughable by draft amendments to mining regulations that instruct decision makers to prioritise economic considerations above all other factors when determining new mine approvals.

In the lead up to the 2011 State Election senior officials from the Department of Planning repeatedly told regional communities that the "pendulum had swung too far" in favour of mining. Barry O'Farrell promised "certainty" to the regional communities of NSW saying that, "sensitive areas exist in NSW where mining and coal seam gas extraction should not occur," as well as delivering his now

infamous "No ifs, no buts" guarantee to protect drinking water catchments from mining.

So when the draft State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) Amendment (Resource Significance) 2013 went on exhibition in late July, communities were stunned to discover that not only would the changes allow

the "pendulum had swung too far" in favour of mining

mining to take place anywhere, but that mines could be approved even if they failed to meet environmental and social impact standards.

Gone is the promised certainty for

regional communities and gone is the highly promoted delivery of cumulative impact assessment through Strategic Regional Land Use Plans. The fast-tracking of changes to mining regulations is also highly questionable given the wider review of the planning system is yet to be completed.

Should the proposed changes get the green light communities like Bulga in the Hunter Valley will see their village all but obliterated. Coalpac would be allowed to put an open cut mine in an area proposed for addition to the gardens of Stone National Park near Lithgow and Gujarat NRE would massively expand mining in Sydney's water supply catchment despite previous planning decisions valuing water resources above coal.

Container Deposits campaign inspires the next generation

*This campaign has captured the imagination of school children all over Australia, as well as their parents, reports **Lisa Wriley**, TEC's waste campaigner.*

Canterbury Girls High School made the headlines in late July – with the support of the Parents & Citizens committee, the students decided to boycott Coca Cola products in their school. ABC TV news, and radio immediately picked up on the story, running interviews with student spokespeople. An editorial piece entitled “Why our school is boycotting Coca Cola” also ran in the Sun Herald.

“You only have to go down to the Cooks River to see that doing nothing results in a big problem...” wrote CGH student, Thandiwe Gudu. “You will see thousands of bottles either in the river or on the bank. It is a disgrace...students are willing to take charge to make a better Australia for everyone”.

The student outrage culminated in the installation of a water refill station to phase out commercially bottled water. The next logical step for the students was to stop purchasing products from a company that is not supporting the best solution to beverage container litter and low recycling rates. Coca-Cola has also been (unsuccessfully) trying to stop the Northern Territory's Cash for Container system.

Many other school students have become involved in the campaign including a passionate Ascham



School student who attended the presentation of petitions to NSW MP's outside parliament earlier this year; another addressed our rally in Canberra last year; Sydney Girls High School held a Marine and Green Day and made their own Cash for Containers Banner to hang up on their building; two Abbotsleigh

“You only have to go down to the Cooks River to see that doing nothing results in a big problem...”

boarders attended an event in Wahroonga Park and numerous schools have had a turn with the Coastal Campaign kit – taking group photos with the 10c SOLUTION TO MARINE POLLUTION banner, including Nhullunbuy, and Bulli High School and Ballina Public School.

At the same time Sydney and Melbourne buses are displaying an eye catching ad using an image of Laura Wells, the internationally famous Australian ‘Plus Size’ model, Environmental Scientist and

supporter of the CDS campaign. The poster shows Wells lying on Maroubra Beach a la Max Dupain's iconic The Sunbaker, surrounded by bottles and cans instead of beautiful sand.

Reverse Vending machines will be a key feature of a national, efficient Container Deposit System and the Boomerang Alliance has recently held Refund Days demonstrating the

machines to show people how they work (check out the video of the Darwin RVM, on The BoomerangAlliance youtube channel).

Another highlight of the CDS calendar occurred on August 8 when the Northern Territory obtained exemption from the Mutual Recognition Act with the support of all states, territories and the Commonwealth who each had to gazette a regulation. Coca Cola, Lion and Schweppes had originally won a Federal Court case under the Act, but a (long-winded) process allowed the exemption. The NT cash for containers scheme has already saved over 60 million cans and bottles from landfill or littering.

As Newspolls continue to show there is over 80% support amongst Australians for the 10cent deposit scheme on drink containers, it's clear that the community is not going to let this one go away.

Impacting TEC's Voice

Ruth Hessey explores TEC's new communications frontier

It may come as a surprise even to our long time supporters, but Jeff Angel and TEC are now operating in something called "the Impact Space." In fact we've been there all along.

This is the space where change happens as a result of a film or other cultural artefact that attracts sizeable attention in the mainstream culture and facilitates either behavioural change or a shift in attitudes and public consciousness. It's a space that has been dominated by advertising since the 1950s which has used it very effectively to manipulate public desire in order to sell things. Now NGOs and social justice movements are claiming the space for non commercial imperatives, often using the same techniques perfected in retail, to sell ideas about what sort of society we want to live in, and how we are going to make the right sort of changes happen.

In fact the impact space has become a new boom sector in communications in the US and UK and you'll no doubt hear more about it in the next few years. TEC's track record on successful campaigns is proof we have been out there "impacting" for the past 4 decades, interpreting environmental threats and converting the available information, which is often highly complex and opaque, into language the average person can grapple with.

In more recent times TEC's award winning film Waste Not, and its recently launched interactive online resource, www.wastenot.org.au have taken the news online and onto screens large and small all over Australia via Ronin Films, with support from the Documentary Australia Foundation, and the Pratt and Myer foundations. Waste Not's optimistic inspirational message has reached into business class on Qantas, staff engagement in corporations such as the NAB, and Fujitsu, and even Fairfax Digital online. With the launch of our learning activities via www.wastenot.org.au, for high school students studying English, Geography, Science and Art, we are reaching out to teachers, schools, parents and

communities.

Already, if you follow our campaign facebook pages (so far TEC, Waste Not and Living Landscapes all have their own pages) you'll find these have become a great resource for spotlighting media stories from all over the world which are relevant to our campaigns and challenges. There is so much innovation happening it's important to learn from what community groups, government initiatives and scientific researchers are doing in other countries as well as our own. We try to update these pages every day.

Our future plans are even more ambitious. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the TEC website functioned in a similar fashion to the website we have created for the Waste Not campaign? Our dream is to have an entertaining, animated glimpse into each campaign with a raft of learning activities attached so that visitors and ongoing supporters

can get something inspiring and new each time they visit the site. We'd like to be able to send out multi media releases, and also pop some video goodies into the regular newsletters and e-updates. We'd also like to showcase your feedback, and highlight your eco-success stories, as well as our own.

Of course we need more funds to act on these ideas, but we do already get tremendous help from talented volunteers such as Liana Stefano who has been a driving force behind the online campaign for CDS. In fact if you have digital media skills don't hesitate to drop by and have a talk with us about working on potential campaign material.

TEC has also achieved "impactful" results through collaborating with students at various universities such as UTS, and UNSW and by the end of the year another group of talented under grads will have contributed witty animated short films to some of our core campaigns. Keep an eye on the TEC home page and don't forget to check the media and video tabs from time to time.

TEC's track record on successful campaigns is proof we have been out there "impacting" for the past 4 decades,

‘Pea and Thimble’ Trick Corrupts BioBanking

Developers are poised to buy our public land and then offer it back to us, Leigh Martin reports

In what appears to be an extraordinary attempt to manipulate biodiversity offset schemes, Wyong Shire Council is attempting to reclassify 399 parcels of Council owned land from Community Land to Operational Land. The sites include SEPP 14 wetlands, endangered ecological communities, foreshore lands and riparian zones. Reclassification of these sites would make them eligible for sale, and remove obligations for Wyong Council to protect their environmental values. It would also make them available for later use as biobanking ‘offsets’.

Under biobanking rules developers and councils may ‘offset’ the environmental impacts of a proposed development by protecting and managing land of equivalent conservation value. Land used for offsets must pass an ‘additionality’ test. That is, it must be additional to land currently held for environmental purposes. As it is already protected from development,

Community Land cannot be used for offsets

By reclassifying sites from Community Land to Operational Land, Wyong Council will strip them of their conservation protections. It would thus be able to sell them to developers who could then use some or all of them as offsets. Land that would previously have failed the additionality test will now pass it. In effect, Wyong Council is creating a land bank for developers to circumvent the purpose of biobanking and making money from selling public land. There will be no increase in land protected – in fact there may be less as some could be developed.

If successful Wyong Shire Council will create a dangerous precedent that will be used by developers and councils throughout NSW. TEC is lobbying the state government to close this loophole in biobanking and planning laws.

The sites include 14 wetlands, endangered ecological communities, foreshore riparian zones



NSW moves on energy efficiency

The O’Farrell government’s has finally done something half decent in the energy and climate change field. The release of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan sets specific targets and extends the successful Energy Savings Scheme (ESS),

established after TEC’s strenuous lobbying and which sets targets for retailers. The Plan claims the combination of energy efficiency and growth of renewable energy will significantly reduce fossil fuel use.

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The new targets are:

- Energy savings of 16,000GW by 2020 – eliminating all forecast growth
- Support 220,000 low income households to reduce energy use by 2014
- Deliver 4-star NABERS energy and water ratings for 50% of commercial floor space

The ESS will now be upgraded to allow access for small and medium sized businesses; create incentives to go

beyond BASIX targets (mandatory water and energy efficiency) and for tradespeople to implement efficiency ; and provide access for appliance retailers to make high-efficiency appliances more affordable. The government will also establish a 'dedicated team of energy efficiency specialists' to help key agencies identify and implement energy efficiency.

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Yes, I want to help the environment campaign work of TEC.

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.....Postcode:

I wish to pay by:

- Cheque payable to Total Environment Centre Inc
- Visa Mastercard

I wish to donate:

- \$1000 \$500 \$100 Other \$.....

or Please deduct \$..... monthly from my credit

card until further notice

Card Number:

.....

Card expires:

Name on card:.....

Signature:.....

Phone: (day)

(evening)

- Please send me regular email updates to

.....

Return this form and payment to:

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

I would like to volunteer to help TEC with:

- Reception/support
- Phone marketing
- Research/submission writing
- Other

My previous work has been

My qualifications / skills are.....

.....

My environmental interests are.....

.....

I am available (per week) half day one day

- occasionally other

Name:

Address:

.....Postcode:

Date:

Email:

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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**Total Environment Centre
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TOTAL ENVIRONMENT NEWS



for the future

Diary alert

In the second week of November, early on the evening of Tuesday 12th, TEC invites you to join us for a look at the year ahead in a beautiful rooftop garden setting. Hot lemon tea, refreshing homemade soda drinks, and delicious organic snacks will do wonders for your concentration while Jeff Angel and our campaigners run you through the core challenges we anticipate for 2014 - and report on our achievements in 2013.

We look forward to seeing you!