



TOTAL ENVIRONMENT

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EDITORIAL

Policy circus about to begin

A federal election later this year and the NSW election in March 2011 – the policy circus is about to start.

The Feds

The Rudd government is in terrible trouble over its environmental policies. People are confused about what they are because the CPRS filled the entire space – and now it is stalled irrevocably in the Senate.

Hardly anyone understands how it helps to stop global warming. That's the result of the Rudd government taking its passage for granted with a Turnbull-led Opposition. They didn't feel the need to publicly campaign for it and clear the air over key financial impact issues. Now it's too late and they are struggling to find clarity and direction on climate change.

The federal government has to decide whether to put the CPRS to a double dissolution election; place it on the backburner; or join with the Greens to impose a small scale carbon tax.

It's possible that energy efficiency may rise to the surface if the creation of the Minister for Climate Change and Efficiency and the PM's Taskforce are signals – however that may just be a political management reaction to the insulation debacle. Insulation was a fine initiative but because it was linked to recession avoidance, it was rolled out too fast and on such a large scale that it inevitably fell over.

There are of course other environmental issues such as biodiversity and waste. Peter Garret has been working away at these with the standout decision to pass Commonwealth recycling laws that will target problem products. The first area will be e-waste with discussions between the TV and computer industries, NGOs, recyclers and government now underway. Whether the scheme will start in February 2011 as promised and importantly the legislation that will accredit such schemes is passed in the next few months is unclear. If the Minister and the government fail – they really will have lost all credibility.

Tony Abbot has his direct action and 'no great big tax' climate policies which are probably well informed by focus groups. They are there to fill a gap where no real Coalition policies exist. As for what else he might say on the environment the omens are not good – so far he has opposed land clearing

laws and wild river protection. It's unknown what he will do on the recycling legislation.

NSW

The NSW Labor government is odds-on to be defeated. Nevertheless they would like to retain a good proportion of seats and fend off the Greens in Leichhardt and Marrickville so they can build towards the 2015 election.

For that they will need good environmental policies. Environment Minister, Frank Sartor has the capacity to deliver these – but will the dominant right allow them through? The Keneally Cabinet is certainly not 'green' and unlike Bob Carr, the Premier is an unknown quantity when it comes to environmental sympathies.

The recent red gum decision is a case in point. While the 107,000ha of new park are more or less what was recommended by the Natural Resources Commission – the decision to log half of the best remaining forest before becoming park was a step back into the dark ages. That was the sort of thing they did in the 1970s under Coalition and Labor as we battled to save the rainforests and stop woodchipping.

Land clearing laws have become a new battleground with the Nationals Leader apparently vowing to throw them out at a farmers rally outside Parliament House. The Keneally government will keep them. It's most likely a Coalition government would stall on new park (terrestrial and marine) and wilderness declarations.

Public transport will be a crucial issue – to help relieve congestion and worsening air pollution and global warming emissions. Voters will have to decide who can deliver new public transport the quickest. Sydney's transport is in a parlous state – we are so far behind what is needed and expansion costs so much – there's a massive job ahead.

TEC will be maintaining a vigil over the policy 'circus' that will soon be arriving. We aim to sound the alert where necessary and also submit new proposals. With some forces aiming to step backwards we need to be on the front foot.

Jeff Angel, Director

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Newsletter Team

Editors • Jeff Angel, Ruth Hessey

Printing • Breakout

Design • Steven Granger

Contributors to this Issue

Jeff Angel

Dave Burgess

Jane Castle

Tee Lim

Sarah van Erp

Murray Hogarth

Published by

Total Environment Centre Inc
Level 4, 78 Liverpool St
Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: 02 9261 3437

Fax: 02 9261 3990

tec@tec.org.au

www.tec.org.au

TEC NEWS AND ACTION ROUNDUP

Big Bulli Longwall Mine: TEC strongly objected to BHP Billiton's decision not to present at public hearings of the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) into its proposed massive coal mine expansion south of Sydney. TEC pointed out that significant questions of procedural fairness hung over the review after it was discovered BHPB had presented its case in private hearings.

At the public consultation TEC along with other environment groups condemned BHPB's environment assessment of the impact of longwall in Sydney's metropolitan water catchment area as inadequate. We also released a new study into the impacts on headwater swamps. The panel will report to the Minister for Planning in late April.

Green Jobs Plan for Victoria: TEC joined Friends of the Earth and Boomerang Alliance on the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne, calling for all Victorian political parties to commit to a Green Jobs package before the 2010 state election. The



comprehensive green jobs package would potentially deliver over 20,000 new Victorian jobs in green industries within the next 5 years: Energy and Water efficiency (6,900 new green jobs by 2014), Public Transport (6,650 new green jobs by 2014), Renewable Energy (4,000 green jobs immediately), Recycling (3,100 new green jobs by 2014), Solar Water Heating (1,500 new green jobs by 2020).

Who Cares About The Environment: TEC noted that the "Who Cares About The Environment in 2009" report released by NSW Environment Minister Sartor showed that Australians are greener than their leaders. The report indicated that the environment remains in the top five issues for NSW Government attention, both now and in the future, and the number of people who feel concerned to some extent about environmental problems now sits at 78%. Knowledge about the greenhouse effect has increased markedly since 1994, with over three-quarters of those surveyed believing climate change is happening (78%) and almost as many (69%) confirmed in the belief that the NSW Government should take urgent action on this issue.

A comforting piece to emerge is that the public think environment NGOs are far more credible than industry or politicians.

Defending Land Clearing Laws: TEC warned the NSW coalition that it must choose between a sound environment policy or environmental extremism after a farmers demo outside Parliament House. National Leader, Andrew Stoner stood outside Parliament and called for the NSW Native Vegetation Act to be torn up. TEC Director, Jeff Angel said, "To adopt such a position would plunge NSW back into the dark ages, threatening dozens of endangered fauna and flora, and creating massive carbon emissions."

Later the Opposition downplayed the comments - TEC will be discussing the land clearing policy with the Coalition in the near future.

Air Pollution Getting Worse: TEC announced that 'Sydney's Air Quality Sucks', and warned state political parties to get ready for a public health emergency, based on the findings of the Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Water report which projects Sydney's air quality to 2026. We suggested that "poor air quality will be an obvious and very real political embarrassment," at the next state election due in summer, March 2011. The main smog chemical, ozone is caused by the reaction of auto and industrial emissions with sunlight. It is

the third most important greenhouse gas after carbon dioxide and methane, and the prime component of smog.

TEC will also soon begin a review of the city's Action for Air strategy.

Big power price hikes not CPRS based:

TEC warned that successive NSW governments have failed to address the waste and inefficiency of our power-generation network over recent decades. TEC director, Jeff Angel said that "the result is an energy market bent on encouraging consumers to use more electricity, by building more

infrastructure, rather than introducing smart measures to reform the system we already have and make it more efficient."

TEC called for 'power to the people' by talking action on efficiency. The nightmare continued with IPART's 18 March endorsement of 60% price hikes for a bigger system. TEC estimates up to a third can be avoided (see article this newsletter).

Carbon, Capture & Storage: TEC organised a debate on CCS in Melbourne with the Global CCS Institute and Canadian Government. Industry said we must have CCS because coal power is important and will remain so. Green economists and NGOs argued CCS was just a 'hope' and should not receive the bulk of carbon action funding (with renewables getting more) and that industry should be liable for long term risks such as escape of CO₂, not government. Interestingly our Canadian speaker said the private sector does hold such risks in North America.

Bulli Blunder

Secrecy surrounds BHPB's latest mine proposal. **Dave Burgess**, Natural Areas Campaigner digs up the truth about planning and transparency.

For the second time in the space of twelve months NSW Government agencies have expressed major concerns over a longwall mine proposal under the Southern water catchments.

With 136 longwall panels, BHP Billiton's Bulli Seam Operations plan is the largest underground mine plan ever put forward in NSW. If approved the Dharawal State Conservation Area – including the largely intact Stokes and O'Hares creek catchments and many upland swamps – would be undermined and cracked, along with more water supply catchment land and numerous waterways.

Submissions to a NSW Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) inquiry from DECCW, Sydney Catchment Authority, the Office of Water and the Department of Industry and Investment all opposed major aspects of the mine proposal, warning of serious impacts on water and bushland. The PAC report and a determination by NSW Planning Minister Tony Kelly are expected by April.

At the previous PAC inquiry held into the Metropolitan Mine under the Woronora Catchment, Peabody Energy and the various agencies all presented publicly. However upon arrival at this inquiry community groups discovered that BHP Billiton and the agencies had made their presentations to the Commission in private, some months before.

Following several questions being put to Tony Kelly in Parliament regarding the secretive style of the inquiry, the Sydney Morning Herald was able to discover memos in which senior bureaucrats had instructed agency officials to present their concerns in private rather than at a public hearing.

Developers and agencies are under no obligation to present at public hearings of the PAC, although they can be forced by the Commission itself. However in the words of then Planning Minister Kristina Keneally upon the establishment of the PAC in 2008, the Commission was formed to 'deliver the NSW

public more transparency, accountability and certainty about planning decisions'. By choosing (or being forced) to present in private the NSW Government agencies have certainly failed to give the community confidence that all is above board with the Bulli Seam proposal.

Conservation reversed

TEC's position on the terrestrial impacts of the plan has been to take a stance of no mining under Dharawal State Conservation Area. In 1993 then opposition leader Bob Carr declared his intention to gazette Dharawal as a National Park. The Dharawal SCA Plan of Management (2006) also reaffirms the intention of upgrading its protection status and nominating the upland swamps that dot the landscape for RAMSAR listing. TEC considers it highly unlikely that undermining of these swamps would maintain the area's biodiversity and ecological integrity. We have also sought to ensure that BHPB does not gain initial approval to mine under the Metropolitan Special Area.

During the assessment process TEC engaged Australian Wetlands Consulting to assess BHP Billiton's plan to undermine upland swamps (key to stream water supply) within the project area. Their study also concluded that BHP Billiton's plans were flawed and inadequate in terms of mapping, rehabilitation plans and ability to deliver offsets.

TEC is also opposed to BHP Billiton being granted the full 30-year approval as do government agencies.

TEC expects the NSW Government to live up to the promises made to increase protection for Dharawal SCA. Two further mine proposals covering the remainder of the Woronora Plateau's upland swamps are expected later this year and a high standard of protection must be set here, otherwise future generations will inherit a collapsing catchment.



Energy Efficiency gets a PUSH

Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner

Saving energy will account for a massive 65% of greenhouse reductions by 2020, according to the International Energy Agency. If that's the case, then energy efficiency is about to blast its way onto centre-stage. In the policy void left by the failure of the emissions trading scheme (ETS), the win-win of saving energy (and electricity bills and greenhouse emissions) is a no-brainer for both the major political parties.

Australia is the third worst energy guzzler of OECD countries, behind the US and Canada. The upside is that there is a huge bounty of energy savings waiting to be harnessed. The critical goal should be firstly to wind back increasing demand that is currently rising at around 2% per year. Once energy consumption is held constant, the next task is to reduce it even further, making possible the retirement of polluting coal-fired power stations. If this is not achieved, then the growth in renewable energy will merely fill some of the demand for new power and greenhouse emissions will continue to rise.

A comparison of per capita energy consumption in Australia and California shows that despite population growth, economic growth and rising standards of living it's possible to keep getting smarter about how we use energy. The difference in Australia is a historic vulnerability of successive governments to the lobbying power of mining and energy companies. It has led to a disproportionate capacity of those interests to shape energy policy and a market environment that gives energy suppliers incentives to sell more, not less, electricity.

The 'elephant in the grid' is the National Electricity Market. It has meant that energy efficiency has been relegated to an uncoordinated hodgepodge of 'bolt on' policies, including COAG's National Strategy for Energy Efficiency and a grab bag of tokenistic Federal and state schemes.

Efficiency at policy tipping point?

The latest debacle of the Federal Government's Home Insulation Scheme is unlikely to do much permanent damage to the reputation of energy efficiency. On the contrary, it may have delivered an unexpected windfall: energy efficiency has suddenly 'grown up' to claim an identity of its own with a new Minister for Energy Efficiency, Greg Combet. This is a turning point for the newly named Climate Change and Energy Efficiency portfolio which until now has been obsessively preoccupied with emissions trading at the expense of any other climate change policy. Clearly, the Government has realised that it desperately needs to develop the impression that it is doing something on climate change besides the ETS.

The other key development has been the creation of the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Energy Efficiency in late 2009 as part of the Government's deal with the Opposition on emissions trading. It has now started work.

TEC works with industry and NGOs

In March this year Total Environment Centre recognised the need for the multifarious advocates for energy efficiency to communicate, coordinate and strengthen the campaign for energy efficiency. The Energy Efficiency Roundtable brought together over 40 key advocates to kick-start this campaign. Around the table were the newly formed Alliance to Save Energy, the Energy Efficiency Council, CHOICE, environmental and social non-government organisations, local councils, experts and energy efficiency providers.

TEC will coordinate this group of key stakeholders to set in motion an effective campaign to get energy efficiency on the radar – and keep it at the centre of policy making.

Power Bill Conundrum

Energy campaigner **Tee Lim** explains the inexplicable: why are power bills going up so much?

Consumers are set to start paying a lot more for electricity – up to 62% more by 2013 in New South Wales, with other states also expecting substantial rises. Much blame has been placed on the Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), yet the scheme's future remains uncertain following several unsuccessful attempts to pass it through Parliament – it is still several years away at best.

The story of the bigger and more certain driver of the power price increases remains largely untold. Electricity networks are raising their network charges, and seeking to spend over \$40 billion in capital expenditure over the next five years, largely on expanding network infrastructure – the 'poles and wires' that distribute the electricity generated mainly by Australia's coal-fired power stations. This is unprecedented expenditure, on the scale of the national broadband rollout. While some of the \$40 billion of investment will necessarily go into maintaining a secure electricity supply for a growing population, much of it is only expanding and entrenching an inefficient and polluting power system.

Estimates suggest that perhaps a third of the spending – around \$13 billion – could be avoided with more environmentally sensible investment, including energy savings and demand management measures. Yet the network businesses propose to spend only a bare minimum on energy savings measures, despite them being proven to be nearly four times more cost-effective than building more poles and wires. For example, Energy Australia in NSW is proposing to spend

less than 0.5% of their budget on energy efficiency and demand management. In contrast, an average network business in the U.S. spends proportionately about five times more than that of one in NSW.

This under-utilisation of demand management is both inefficient and irresponsible in the context of the unnecessary electricity price increases and Australia's rising greenhouse emissions, driven largely by the supply of carbon intensive electricity. The failure by networks to implement large-scale demand management is a lost opportunity for both reduced electricity bills for consumers and the least expensive greenhouse emissions reductions, and places the inappropriate burdens of climate change and increased carbon costs on present and future generations.



Compost not Landfill

The organic waste stalemate is over! What does it mean? **Sarah Van Erp**, TEC's Waste Minimisation Campaigner dishes the dirty on organics policy making in NSW

Until very recently this update on organics policy was shaping up as a cry for help for compost derived from mixed waste.

'Hundreds of tonnes of organic waste are piling up,' I wrote with some despondency, "with nowhere to go but straight back to where it was diverted from in the first place – landfill.'

Instead there has been a welcome shift in the stalemate between organics processors and the NSW government. An agreement with TEC's input has been forged, and our recovered organics are now journeying from our homes and workplaces, to be turned into compost for application to land.

Don't get too excited though, we're not talking about a

massive composting revolution as yet, just a turnaround on what was a major debacle for the recyclers who turn our waste into usable compost.

What was the problem? The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) was stalling on producing a workable standard for the application of compost from organics to land, leaving industry and piles of valuable compost stranded.

The problem was devising a standard for the application of compost to land that covered both Alternative Waste Treatment (AWT) and compost from processors who deal with

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source-separated green waste. The difference between these two processes? AWT has to make compost from mixed waste – that means separating out the glass, plastics and mounds of hazardous e-waste that come in their front door. The green-waste composters work with already separated green waste.

Now a standard has been negotiated with TEC's help which includes limits on the size of particulates and the amount of lead present in the compost. Compost from AWT is produced primarily for agricultural markets, and will have to work hard to meet the strict standards for use in plantations, mine rehabilitation and non-contact crops.

And with e-waste recycling laws in the pipeline, AWT processors should soon see a reduction in the amount of hazardous e-waste coming through the general waste stream.

TEC also commends the efforts of Councils such as Waverley and Randwick in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney for rejecting the trend of trucking waste out of the city.

These councils have taken the innovative step of giving composting equipment to residents, and showing them how to make compost themselves.

Thus the practice of moving waste around the city, with its contamination and greenhouse gas emission problems, is beginning to be avoided. More importantly residents have been empowered to solve the problem themselves, at home.

Let's hope the practice spreads.

Truth or Dare

Murray Hogarth is TEC's senior consultant for our Green Capital business program. Here he explains how business can avoid the very real risks associated with climate change.

Now we've blown Australia's one chance in a decade to bring in an emissions trading scheme (ETS); climate science is under reputational attack; and the world's gone AWOL on what happens after the Kyoto Protocol - business doesn't have to worry about carbon action any more?

Well – putting aside the views of many newspaper columnists, talk-show radio hosts and boringly-conservative dinner party guests – that's wrong.

Doing nothing is a not an option!

Practical action on carbon and energy will now be in the spotlight more than ever. Because now everyone knows that governments don't have the global warming crisis in hand, so they'll be looking for action elsewhere.

Not acting, which may seem tempting, will leave businesses exposed to rising energy costs, increasing regulation, commercial and competitive risks, and community pressure.

On the positive side, however, there's plenty that can be done. Different choices or combinations will suit

different businesses, with the potential business benefits including:

- Save energy – reduces pollution and current costs, protects against rising prices and offsets higher costs of using renewable electricity
- Reduce waste – smarter use of often costly resources and reuse/recycling
- Engage staff – improve recruitment and staff retention of the best people and create a culture of sustainability in the workplace e.g. energy-saving behaviours
- Offset emissions – pay for bona fide carbon reduction as an early action strategy that also develops carbon market knowledge and skills
- Sell solutions – upgrade products and develop new ones that help customers and establish competitive advantage
- Advocate good policy – help make the system work better for everyone, and give your business a seat at the decision-making table

Businesspeople are often busy and time-constrained, so simple actions are needed. This includes recommending adoption of straightforward metrics,

which can be meaningful even without perfect performance. In fact, it's often OK to sacrifice absolute pinpoint accuracy for substantial and material progress.

Looking beyond individual businesses to the economy more broadly, similarly straightforward objectives like formally capping growth in national CO₂-e emissions by a set date should be promoted as valid stepping stones to actual emission reductions by 2020, or 2050, or any other date. Access to government grants and subsidies in areas such as energy and carbon should be conditional on businesses delivering verified year-on-year improvements and meeting firm targets such as capping real growth in emissions, or at the very least reducing energy intensity through efficiency gains.

True or false? Managers who dodge or fudge action now may well end up being the biggest losers.

True.

Over 330 sustainability professionals tell TEC their views

A survey conducted by TEC during February has found some clear views about future carbon action. 330 respondents from sustainability business told us:

The results show the fight has not gone out of the campaign.

The largest bloc of survey respondents want either the current CPRS version or a stronger ETS with a higher target and less compensation for polluters. But

given the lack of commitment from political leaders on the CPRS there is strong support for more money for renewables and offsets, and a national energy efficiency target of 25% by 2015, and 50% by 2020.

When it comes to energy efficiency there is a widespread belief that individual organisations could make savings of 10-20% by 2015 and 20-40% by 2020,

Green Capital's Carbon Action Survey, conducted in February-March 2010, was

targeted at a spread of sustainability practitioners and observers across the industry, professional services, government, research and community/NGO sectors. It attracted 330 respondents with 17.6% coming from large corporations, 10.3% coming from small-to-medium businesses and another 8.2% of respondents describing themselves as corporate sustainability practitioners.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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

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Volunteers Coordinator,
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