



# TOTAL ENVIRONMENT

2004 / ISSUE 1

E D I T O R I A L

## Your foot's too big

**Free standing homes are getting larger, even though occupancy rates are declining. The amount of bricks, concrete and tiles mounts as green space, even a lawn, disappears. Houses are cheek by jowl and in the last ten years the market for bigger houses has surged. Along the coast, the small coastal villages are being replaced and expanded with massive villas encroaching into remnant bushland, seeking water frontage along creeks and sending torrents of polluted stormwater into pristine lakes.**

Growth and consumption of resources without regard for the environmental costs.

In many of the new big homes (most built without energy conservation in mind) there is an explosion of air conditioning. In addition the air con models are very inefficient in energy use and are dramatically increasing the load on peak power supplies. Marketed through an ever-present advertising campaign, the sparse messages about green power or energy efficiency have no hope. Electricity is cheap and the responding push for more fossil power, fuels growing greenhouse gas emissions.

Everything about this market driven situation is distorted, leading to bad environmental and social outcomes. Why weren't the signals about energy efficiency of housing stronger and why was industry allowed to foist inefficient air con technology onto our community?

As the authors of 'Natural Capitalism' (Hawker and Lovins, 1999) explain about modern capitalism:

"It is a financially profitable, non-sustainable aberration in human development which does not fully conform to its own accounting principles because it neglects to assign any value to the largest stocks of capital it employs – the natural resources and living systems, as well as the social and cultural systems that are the basis of human capital."

It's not as if the answer comes from the left either. As Mark Lynas, in the Australian Financial Review (27 Feb, 2004) states:

"It is no use looking to the left for a more rational approach. Communists have always regarded nature as little more than raw material to be scraped up and melted down into pig iron by an emancipated proletariat, marching in step to a glorious techno-industrial future. More moderate leftists neglect ecological

concerns in favour of their enduring obsession: human equality – as worthwhile as this objective may be... "Moreover both left and right agree that economic growth should go on forever."

Others argue that we must have economic growth to finance environment protection and restoration.

But in the last 20 years, while we have enjoyed good economic growth in Australia, the ecological footprint of every Australian has increased - that is, the resources required to make the products that we use and the land required to dispose of the waste. More environmentally expensive consumerism.

Has there been a net improvement, as more funding was applied and new environment protection institutions created? A reading of the various 'State of the Environment' reports would say no.

How do the externalities, the environmental costs, become factored into prices and how can better information about a product's environmental costs, operational impacts and recyclability be communicated to consumers?

Can business be part of the solution?

Can we rely on the market or do we need new government regulation and intervention?

Can we transition to an economy that consistently favours environmentally responsible products, rather than anything that can be marketed successfully?

TEC is campaigning to raise the debate on these issues and find solutions.

Jeff Angel, DIRECTOR

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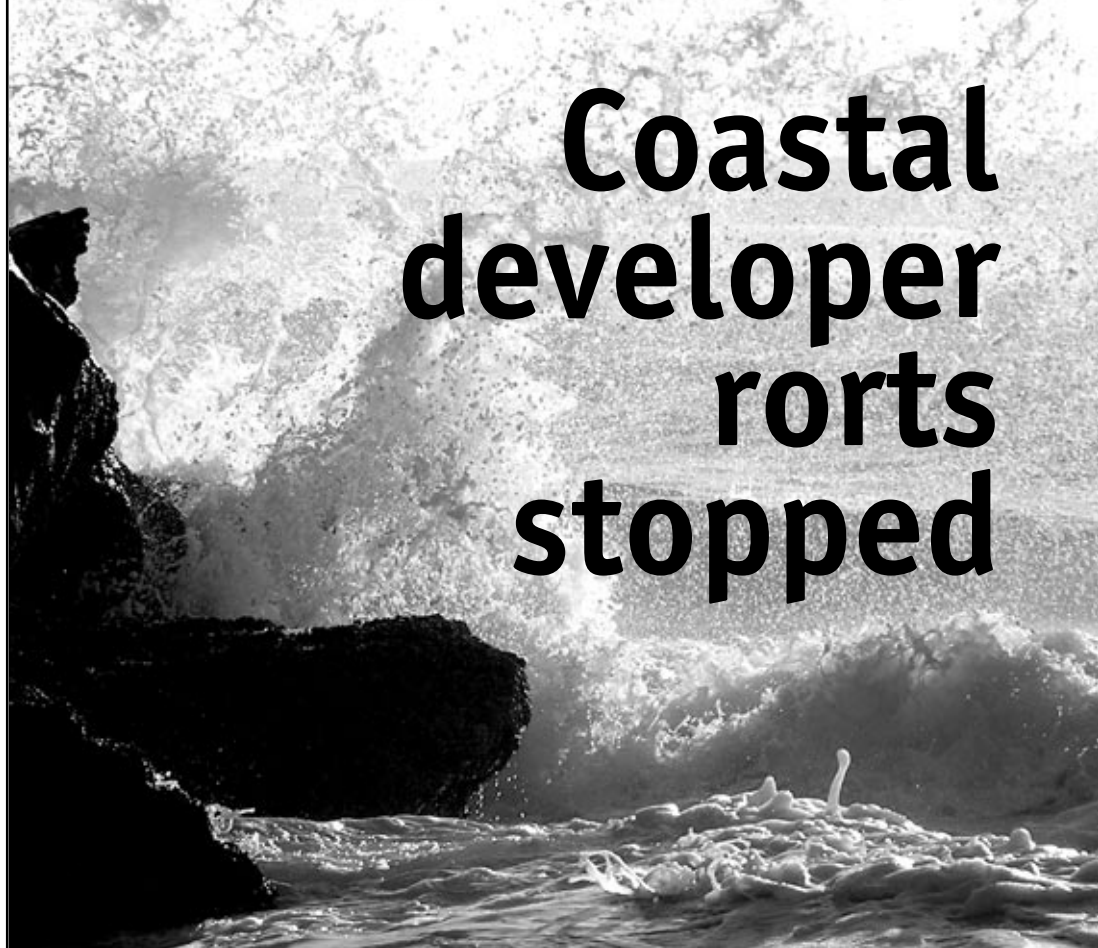
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**Notice: Total Environment now appears three times a year.**



# Coastal developer rorts stopped

**TEC and coastal groups have been successful in their campaign to end developer rorting of a key coastal protection policy and a land clearing exemption. As explained in the previous issue of Total Environment, developers were submitting small packages of subdivisions to escape the need for a master plan under SEPP 71 – Coastal Protection. Development over 25 lots required a plan, agreed by the Minister in order to properly assess urban sprawl, servicing and environmental impacts.**

Planning Minister Craig Knowles has now amended the SEPP so that if an entire property (or adjoining properties under the same owner) has the potential for more than 25 lots, then a small lot application can be rejected and a master plan required. He has also expanded the requirement from residential to commercial and industrial subdivisions.

Another disastrous loophole that allowed clearing of 2ha of bush every year in the coastal zone has been removed following lobbying by TEC and other groups. Current land clearing regulations, developed for large farming enterprises allowed this rate of clearing without consent. However,

small properties, including those engaged in preemptive clearing to pave the way for rezoning for urban development also used the 2ha right. Important coastal vegetation was being lost every year. In some cases adjoining landowners coordinated the clearing to create major rezoning opportunities.

### The Hastings Master Plan

Not satisfied with one loophole (now removed) developers are urging councils to prepare weak master plans and to then seek Ministerial delegation to adopt the plan. Once this is achieved, the Council is then the main consent authority. This too evades the intent of SEPP 71, which aims to improve planning, not validate developer dreams.

TEC has reviewed a request by Hastings Shire Council to approve such a master plan that covers an area between Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills on the Hastings coastline and involves major urban sprawl development. Lake Cathie is already suffering from serious pollution so such sprawl would be devastating to the Lake and remnant vegetation. A meeting between TEC and Hastings Council failed to resolve the matter. We are calling on the government to reject the master plan and take control of planning for the area rather than leaving it with Hastings Council.



# Multi-state emissions trading

**TEC is moving to bring NGOs and business together to develop principles for a multi-state emissions trading scheme. When Premier Bob Carr announced NSW would lead moves for a greenhouse emissions trading scheme, at TEC's 'In Control of Carbon' event, the initiative moved from the moribund federal arena.**

NSW and Victoria are now in active discussions, with other states as observers. Essentially a scheme would penalise carbon rich activities and provide new opportunities for low emission technologies and practices. Also a major new avenue has opened with the European Union, where a new 'linking directive' allows for its 28 countries to connect with other trading schemes which are state or city based. This bypasses the blockage created by the Howard Government's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Agreement.

TEC's Green Capital Program will sponsor meetings in Melbourne and Sydney, where environment NGOs, senior executives and state Ministers will discuss the options.

## PERMANENT WATER RESTRICTIONS

Leigh Martin URBAN CAMPAIGNER

**Sydney's prolonged drought has seen the introduction of mandatory water restrictions for the first time in many years. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that once the drought breaks and dam levels increase that these restrictions can safely be lifted. Current water use levels and population growth mean demand for water in Sydney is already exceeding the 600 Gigalitres (GL) per year 'sustainable' yield of current supplies by at least 25 GL. Unless this situation is reversed there will be growing pressure on the NSW Government to build a new dam at Welcome Reef on the Shoalhaven River.**

The 600 GL figure does not take into account the need for environmental flows to save the stressed Hawkesbury-Nepean river system. An effective environmental flow package will require at least 100GL per year. The true sustainable yield is thus a maximum of 500 GL per year.



It is clear that Sydney faces an enormous water conservation challenge. To meet this challenge a range of strategies are needed. The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is currently investigating pricing reforms to discourage water wastage and penalise Sydney Water for failing to meet water conservation targets. Demand and supply issues are also under review with the strong possibility that the sustainable yield figure will be revised to allow environmental flows. The need for more effluent re-use, rainwater tanks and stormwater harvesting is stronger than ever.

At the heart of all these considerations is one inescapable fact - Sydney must learn to be more efficient in the way it uses water. We can no longer allow water to be wasted on hosing down cars, buildings and driveways. Our thirsty gardens must be transformed by mulching and species that need less water, with an end to wasteful sprinklers.

The State Government should take the lead on this issue and immediately announce the introduction of permanent water restrictions. Sydney has coped well with restrictions this summer as residents have adapted to the new rules. It would be senseless to discard this progress toward sustainability just because some rain has fallen and the dams are temporarily full.

Sydney is not alone in facing a long-term water crisis. Cities around Australia are grappling with the need to place water consumption on a sustainable footing. Melbourne has already responded to its long-term water conservation challenge by introducing permanent outdoor water restrictions.



# GE MORATORIUM UNDER THREAT

**At the last election, the Carr Government promised a 3 year moratorium on commercial GE crops. They passed legislation to implement this – but also included a provision to allow Ministerial exemption from the moratorium. Monsanto and Bayer have quickly moved to use this exemption and the Minister for Agriculture is now poised to make a decision. The NSW decision will be a precedent for the rest of Australia.**

The Minister is receiving heavily biased advice from his Advisory Council. The majority of Council members have an actual interest in the 5,000ha GE canola crop going ahead. They are not really trials but are a commercial crop to be sold on the open market.

There is a real risk of contamination of other farmers' crops and that they will be subsequently sued by Monsanto and Bayer CropScience for breach of intellectual property rights (as has already happened in Canada).

83% of canola seed stocks in the USA are contaminated with GE material according to the Union of Concerned Scientists. Our state supplies GE-free canola seed stock to the rest of Australia and will no longer be able to do this if these commercial GE canola crops go ahead.

Because canola, wheat and barley are rotated every other year, there is a certainty that wheat and barley stocks will also be contaminated with GE canola. Many of our most important markets want 100 % only GE-free wheat and barley. It won't be possible to guarantee our wheat and barley will be 100% GE free if these commercial GE canola crops go ahead. Our international markets are watching and will no doubt be aware of the contamination problems.

Farmers who are contaminated with the herbicide resistant canola will be obliged to use 2-4D or other more hazardous herbicides to kill the GM canola plants. 2-4D is a major risk for

cotton farmers, orchardists, grape growers and other crops as well as native vegetation.

It is also a certainty that roadsides will be contaminated with GE canola for hundreds of kilometres as trucks carry the crops from farm to terminal. This is going to create a series of problems both legal and environmental. Shire councils will be obliged to clean up roadside contamination, again using 2-4D or worse herbicides.

This of course has serious consequences for the travelling stock route, especially in times of drought, because 2-4D remains in the environment for a longer period than the currently used glyphosate, and cattle and sheep risk becoming contaminated with these pesticides. They will also undoubtedly be eating GE canola plants creating further potential problems for our overseas markets.

These GE canola crops also have the potential to affect our beef, pork, honey, fish farming and dairy industries, who all rely on canola being GE free.

There is increasing worldwide consumer and retail food industry resistance to genetically engineered food as more information and research becomes available. Currently we sell all of our GE free canola and other crops and even get a small premium.

# Empire builder put on notice in Central West

Jane Castle  
RESOURCE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGNER

**TEC is campaigning with local groups to stop one of the most powerful and under-regulated electricity monopolies, TransGrid, from unnecessarily expanding its network in NSW's Central West at the expensive of clean, cost-effective demand management and local generation.**

The 1000MW Wollar to Wellington line, planned to meet growth of a mere 8 MW per year, is huge over-capacity. TEC's investigation of the proposal revealed that it has an economic disbenefit of \$24-\$39 million dollars for which tax-payers will have to pay if it goes ahead. The line will create more greenhouse emissions by locking users in to coal-fired generation.

TEC has called on the national regulator, the ACCC to send TransGrid back to the drawing board. TransGrid has ignored a 2001 report which confirmed a range of alternatives including local gas generation (75MW), energy efficiency (50MW) and wind energy (10MW). These cleaner, cheaper options, which supply well in excess of energy requirements for the area, have been suppressed by Transgrid in favour of the \$68 million line.

## Hidden Agendas

It comes as no surprise that the proposed over-capacity line runs right past the Ulan coal mine. Secret Government documents leaked to the media earlier this year revealed plans for a new 1000MW coal-fired power station at the mine, Project Waratah. If the line is being built to serve another dirty, coal-fired power station, it is a pre-emptive and perverse subsidisation of transmission infrastructure for large-sale generation. This subsidy would disadvantage local generators which, in contrast, would have to pay full connection and infrastructure charges, and face a market flooded with artificially discounted coal-fired electricity.



## Demand Management Funds to Unleash Huge Energy Savings

**Huge savings in energy efficiency will be unleashed if the recommendations of TEC's new report on demand management (DM) are adopted by the State and Commonwealth Governments. It calls for changes to Australia's electricity market, including the establishment of Demand Management Funds.**

In November 2003, Premier Carr announced the establishment of a taskforce to establish a DM Fund for NSW. Then in February 2004, one of the world's leading demand management proponents from the US, David Nemptzow, was confirmed as new Director-General of the Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability. TEC is now pushing for the rapid implementation of DM Funds across Australia to capture huge savings of at least 35%.

In the US, 20 States have Demand Management Funds which have saved consumers around \$4 billion annually. DM Funds help kickstart the market for energy efficiency providers so that they can compete with a market dominated by electricity suppliers bent on selling more.

Our report, "Demand Management and the National Electricity Market" is available on TEC's website at [www.tec.org.au](http://www.tec.org.au)



# DEVELOPERS' AGENDA GAINS GROUND

## deregulating local development controls

Fran Kelly NATURAL AREAS CAMPAIGNER

A NSW Government Taskforce, established to review planning and development controls in NSW, has released a report on the assessment of developments at local council level. The report - **Improving Local Development Assessment in NSW** – is one of several planning and development reviews that have either been completed or are underway. It has been largely driven and shaped by the development industry, with most of the recommendations for change expanding opportunities for development while cutting community, local and state government involvement and regulation. There was no community and environment NGO membership of the taskforce.

### Key recommendations are of great concern:

#### Local Government level changes

- Forcing a “one size fits all” Local Environment Plan (LEP) on all NSW local government areas, regardless of differing landscapes and environments.
- Making it mandatory for most residential housing DAs (up to 70%) to be assessed by private certifiers rather than the local council (“complying development”). It is also proposed to expand this regime to commercial and industrial development and into environmentally sensitive areas.
- Reducing local council controls and checks on all residential development (complying and non-complying) with the aim of achieving a seven-day turnover time for development approvals. Developers will also be able to pay a fee to get their development approvals fast-tracked.

#### State Government level changes

- Removing the requirements for councils to consult with and obtain concurrence on DAs from state government agencies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and reducing the approvals role of government agencies in “integrated” developments.
- Transferring the responsibility for auditing private certifiers and the handling of complaints against them from specialists in planning (DIPNR) to the Department of Commerce.

#### Community level changes

- Notifying neighbours and the broader community of a complying development after approval has been given.
- Removing the ability for the community to challenge local council approvals for development.

### Don't give developers more control

The review ignores the environmental and social impacts of development, treating planning simplistically as if the landscape exists only for the benefit of developers. The use of a “one size fits all” plan ignores the differing social and environmental landscapes in each government area. For example a fragile coastal wetland in northern NSW could not be protected by a plan suited to a suburb in Sydney. Mandatory complying development which allows residences and major alterations to residences to be done without council assessment or approval ignores the fact that even

single developments have an impact and therefore need to be regulated to some degree.

The recommendations would cut the little opportunity there is for the community to challenge and have input to planning and development decisions that can impact, often profoundly, on their amenity and surrounding environment. The “community” extends far beyond immediate neighbours to include those affected by loss of water quality and natural bushland, polluted run off, or increased flooding as a result of inappropriate development.

Finally there is an important role for state agencies such as the NPWS which provide the specialist expertise needed to determine the impact of a development on, for example, threatened species. Local councils and developer impact statements are rarely adequate.

The justifications given for this Review and its recommendations have been largely based on anecdotal evidence from the development industry. The industry has consistently lobbied against regulation of its activity. Where developers have been successful in persuading government to weaken planning laws the negative impact has been felt by the natural environment and broader community. This is particularly evident on the coast of NSW where weak regulation has resulted in extensive clearing and development from north to south that takes little notice of the landscape, environmental values and residential amenity.

The State Government should not facilitate the weakening of planning laws at a time when there is a demonstrated need for far stronger and less ambiguous planning and development regulations that place the landscape, residential amenity and environmental constraints ahead of developers' demands.

Not only should the Government reject the taskforce report it should also ban developer donations to councillors and political parties at local and state level, so vested interests are removed from the planning process.

**ACTION:** Make your objections known to Planning Minister, Craig Knowles, Level 33, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney 2000.

# HELP THE ENVIRONMENT TODAY FOR OUR FUTURE

## 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,  
Level 2, 362 Kent Street, Sydney 2000.

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