



TOTAL ENVIRONMENT

2003 / ISSUE 1

E D I T O R I A L

Voting for the environment

At the time of writing some big ticket environment policies had not been released. For up to date information visit - www.envote.info - the joint groups election website.

The Greens are experiencing well deserved attention as many major party voters and the younger age group, respond to their clear acknowledgment of issues and statements of principle. They have also obtained useful parliamentary experience to 'work the system'. In the NSW Parliament the combination of Greens, Richard Jones, Democrats and other independents resulted in more successful amendments to dubious legislation, than those by the entire Opposition.

A strong progressive cross bench in the Upper House, is essential and environment groups are urging voters to place 1 for the Greens and 2 for the Democrats, on the top of Upper House ballot paper.

But the Lower House is where governments are made.

The new voting rules allow optional preferential voting, that is, placing a '1' in the box for your chosen candidate and not distributing preferences for any further candidates. This is dangerous for the main parties who are losing first preference votes (to minor parties and independents) and must seek the voter's number '2' vote, in order to get a majority. Does the voter act in protest or be pragmatic by showing their initial leaning and then supporting a major party candidate?

It's a tough call as those who are concerned about the scale and depth of environmental threats and frustrated by lack of concerted progress, will want to make an impression on the politicians, that persists over the four-year electoral term.

Some will say that dispatching the Carr government to the Opposition benches (while seeking a progressive balance of power in the Upper House) will reinvigorate the ALP. Others will not want to take the risk and will seek to secure the relative best major party for the environment.

The Carr record

The Carr Government has been very active on the environment in the last 8 years - how well has the Carr government performed? After 8 years and lots of profile on green issues, you would expect some pervasive evidence that significant environmental gains have been made. Certainly in the case of national parks, the addition

of 1.5million hectares has been a great and historic development. Much new environmental legislation is on the books (although implementation and bureaucratic performance leaves much to be desired in some key areas). Funding for the environment has grown considerably. The Snowy River was put on the road to recovery with a joint NSW/Victorian program.

And in the last hours of the 2002 Parliament, the government's mandatory greenhouse scheme for the electricity industry was passed - giving teeth to the Premier's oft-stated concerns about human induced climate change.

The Coalition has grown steadily antagonistic to our environmental campaigns in the bush, but has been somewhat more advanced on urban issues such as protection of public land and public transport.

A key question is - can the Carr Government do more and make some of the big changes that are needed? Below is our Report Card (to 12/03/03) to help you decide.

2003 ELECTION REPORT CARD

	ALP	LIB/NAT
End broadscale land clearing	✓	X
Protect Brigalow woodlands	?	X
Save threatened species	✓	X
Moratorium on GM food crops	✓	✓
Parks for north coast old growth forests	✓	X
Coastal protection	✓	X

* based on statements and questionnaire - www.envote.info

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

Urban footprints

SYDNEY – THE URBAN SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE



As Sydney enters the 21st century embroiled in controversies about its future shape and environment, it is timely to push the debate towards a new vision. Perhaps more than at any period in its past there are contradictory forces battling to put their stamp on the city – medium density; fringe development; international city; car-dependent, resource-guzzling metropolis; sustainable city – are all themes currently in play. Population growth and reducing the impacts of the existing population, are essential concerns.

TEC believes the ecological vision of Sydney has not received sufficient attention and the theme of environmental sustainability deserves a central place in the debate. In a new report, *Sydney – the urban sustainability challenge* we examine Sydney's future.

Sprawl versus consolidation

In the last decade community opposition to medium and high-density residential units has emerged. The debate has been skewed by examples of bad practice – poor design, exploitation by some developers of aged and disabled housing provisions and over-development.

Yet Sydney's population is expanding so fast that we have to add within the Greater Metropolitan Region, the equivalent of Wagga Wagga every 10 months. The damage to land, air and water is significant.

Previous attempts to contain Sydney and preserve green belts have failed and now there is increasing population pressure (outstripping previous projections) for further growth. At the same time occupancy ratios of housing have fallen, so that proportionately more houses are needed. The issues of housing choice and affordability are looming large in planning strategies. While it appeared that increased density was the main direction of government policy, the State Government has recently announced the investigation of 89,000 lots for fringe development.

The impact of road based transport on air quality, health and household finances has been an enduring concern, yet public transport provision significantly lags. Attempts have been made to integrate land use and transport but these are yet to have a pronounced impact. Bushland remains in peril and water and energy consumption threaten the environment.

The scale of the environmental problems faced by the Greater Metropolitan Region now and in the future – particularly with an increasing population and traffic, some further fringe development and urban consolidation – cannot be understated. Either the problems will be managed and the ecological footprint reduced or there will be an unwelcome and observable reduction in quality of life.

A range of community, planning and government stakeholders have called for a more compact, environmentally sustainable city coupled with improved mechanisms for community participation in planning.

Ecological Footprinting

The 1997 NSW State of the Environment Report assesses Sydney's ecological footprint as 37 times the size of its actual land area. TEC commissioned the Institute of Sustainable Futures to review Australian footprint studies for their relevance to the sprawl versus consolidation debate and the Sydney situation.

It found evidence to be sketchy, but that transport energy and emissions, embodied housing energy and emissions and outdoor water use, to be lower in more compact urban forms. Rigorous study of a range of environmental factors should occur, ensuring that the social, demographic and economic characteristics of those housed in different urban forms, are matched.

TEC also commissioned Gillespie Economics to assess a range of benefit/cost studies. They show that urban consolidation produces benefits in terms of savings in physical (e.g. transport and stormwater) and social (e.g. schools, hospitals) infrastructure costs; public transport efficiencies; protection of city fringe-bushland and less air pollution emissions.

Sydney – the urban sustainability challenge is intended to raise a large number of the issues and to increase awareness of stakeholders at all levels of our society. We hope it will also lead to the development of better planning and monitoring tools for use by government, business and the community. The final report will make specific recommendations.

A copy of the report can be downloaded from our website - www.tec.org.au - click on Sustainable Sydney. TEC welcomes comment on the report by 7 April 2003. Please send comments to: Sydney USC, Total Environment Centre, Level 2, 362 Kent Street Sydney 2000 or email: tec@tec.org.au

SYDNEY AT A GLANCE

- Population growth – 54,800 pa
- Population by 2021 – 5 million
- Occupancy ratios – 2.92 in 1981, 2.68 in 2001
- Car use – extra 20m km per day compared to 1990
- Air pollution – 2.5m people exposed to WHO 0.08ppm standard
- Transport CO₂ – 4m tonnes pa
- Rail – need 45% increase in patronage to reach air quality goals
- Water – more than 1,600m litres used each day
- Wastewater disposed – more than 1,300m litres each day
- Electricity greenhouse emissions – 8.40 tonnes per person pa
- Waste landfilled – 4.5m tonnes pa

BANDAIDS ON AN OPEN SORE: RURAL LANDFILLS IN NSW



A recent audit conducted by the NSW EPA revealed the horrific state that rural landfills had descended to over the last 6 years. The audit was conducted on 30 of the 85 rural landfills located outside of the Sydney metropolitan area.

The report disclosed:

- 75% of landfills were inadequately covering waste to minimise environmental impacts.
- 50% of landfills were not adequately screening waste entering the site.
- 23% were accepting potentially toxic waste (fuel drums, batteries, pesticide bottles) without permission.

One of the major problems illuminated in the audit was the mismanagement of contaminated leachate. Leachate is the toxic soup that is produced through the interaction of organic, electronic, packaging and general waste. The audit showed over 20% of rural landfills were making no attempt to capture this toxic soup, allowing it to flow into groundwater and adjacent waterways.

Since the report was completed, the landfill managers have implemented the overwhelming majority of 288 recommendations.

Avoiding waste

However, TEC has labelled this work as merely 'bandaids on an open sore' as they do not address the underlying problem of landfilling waste. TEC also expressed concern that the remaining 55 rural landfills should fall under the same scrutiny and regulations as those subject to the audit.

To combat the growing waste problem, industry and government should be focusing on prevention and avoidance of waste by developing extended producer responsibility (EPR). EPR has been defined as the extension of the responsibility of producers for the environmental impacts of their products throughout the entire product life cycle.

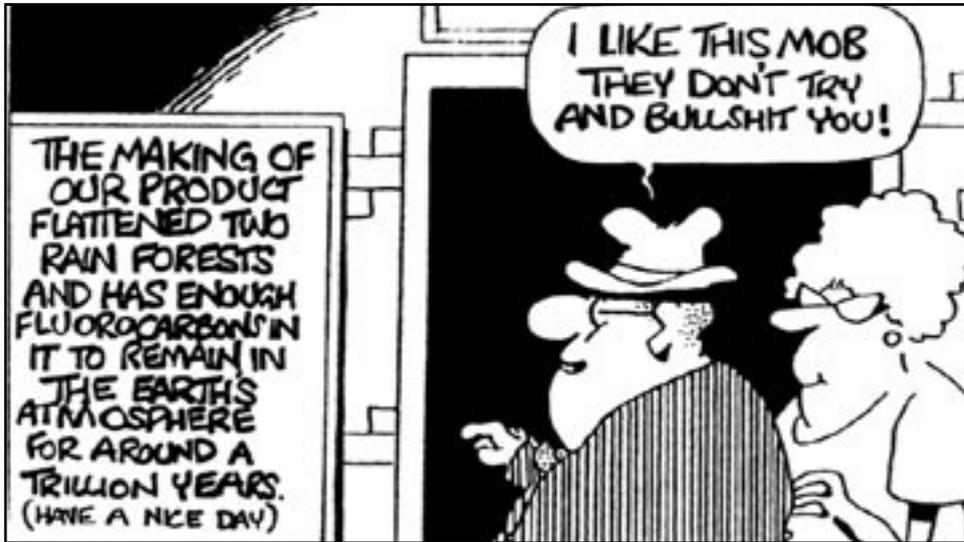
The EPA has just released its priority statement on 'wastes of concern', which identifies tyres, computers, televisions and Ni-Cad batteries as wastes which could attract EPR regulation under the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act (2001). Also put on notice are agricultural/veterinary chemicals, mobile phones and packaging waste.

A priority campaign area for TEC in 2003 will be EPR.

Green Wash!

Dave West, Manager, Green Capital Program

Sick and tired of hearing companies brag about their environmental achievements while they continue to plunder our natural resources? Well so is TEC...



Green Wash is a much used term these days. Whenever a company launches a slick new ad campaign to showcase its environmental achievements, detractors inevitably accuse it of green washing over their environmental problems. Yet no-one seems to be able to explain exactly what Green Wash is.

That's about to change when TEC launches its major new initiative to investigate the issue of Green Wash – 'When Words Speak Louder than Actions'. TEC will define Green Wash and also review the public messages and advertising of the major Australian companies. Our aim is to determine when the message is firmly established in facts and when it is little more than an attempt to spin doctor a poor environmental track record.

Shell

Consider Shell's recent advertising campaign. Shell launched a series of communications to all the major environment groups, TV and press advertising and slick case studies highlighting Shell's achievements in the field of sustainable development. Certainly, each of the ads are based in fact, and there is no question that Shell has done much to reform its overall environmental performance. Yet, the ads also convey an overall feeling that Shell is in the business of saving the planet rather than engaged in a fundamentally damaging activity. Nor do the ads and brochures really acknowledge that Shell still has a long way to go if they are going to operate sustainably.

Is this an example of Green Wash or is it no more than a company trying to foster support for a legitimate attempt to reform their corporate culture and practice?

CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports are also an area where Green Wash may occur. Such reports can be a critical step in terms of the community's right to know about the social and environmental impacts of a company's activities.

However, many CSR reports are lacking in hard data and aim to spin doctor token efforts to meet minimum requirements as equalling corporate leadership within the sustainability arena. What is the role of a CSR report? Should it be a tool for NGO's, shareholders, and customers to judge whether a company has earned its social licence to operate or is it a marketing tool aimed at convincing stakeholders that the company is not that bad after all?

Clearly, the onus is on environmental advocates like TEC to act as a watchdog on the issue of Green Wash. If environment groups are to protect our role of leadership in the sustainability arena we need to establish standards and methods of investigation to ensure that corporations earn 'a social licence to operate' by ensuring that the public messages of corporate Australia are firmly grounded in hard facts.

To this end we're keen to hear from anyone who believes that the advertising messages or reports of individual major corporations are misleading. If you'd like to tell us about a company that you feel is misleading or assist us in researching into Green Wash either send us an email at green.capital@tec.org.au or call Alison or Anthony at our Green Capital program on 02 9279 2945.

A Good Reputation For TEC

Total Environment Centre has been invited to join Greenpeace, The Wilderness Society, Monash University, and the EPA Victoria as the researchers for Reputex which undertake the rating of the 100 largest corporations in Australia.

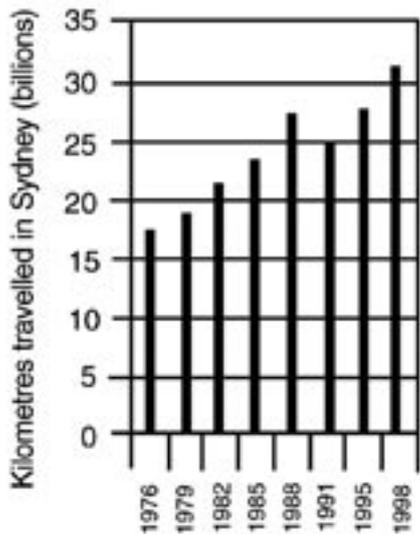
Reputex, which coordinates the program - Social Responsibility Ratings - invited TEC to join the project to strengthen the sustainability assessments.

TEC has built its corporate campaigning over the last year through its work in the Green Capital program and also from projects such as the Community Builders project to develop the capacity of NGO's to assess corporate environmental and social performance.

Reputex is the highest profile assessment of corporate environmental and social performance undertaken in Australia and empowers a range of social, labour, environment and governance groups in the CSR debates.

Public transport forums

Public transport forums organised by TEC held in February in Campbelltown and Sutherland have sent a clear message to parties contesting the State Election that residents of western and southern Sydney demand clean air and effective public transport.



	1991	1997	% Change 1991-97
Population	3,569,000	3,822,000	7.1%
Total VKT	64,038,000	79,106,000	23.5%
Ave VKT pp/day	17.9km	20.7km	15.3%

Vehicle kilometres travelled by residents of the Sydney statistical division on an average weekday, 1991 - 1997.

Speakers from TEC, the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS), Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) and the Western Sydney Community Forum (WSCF), Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and STEP inc called for action to resolve environmental, health and social problems caused by lack of public transport. A range of solutions was presented (see TEC's website - www.tec.org.au - for a full list).

Residents in western and southern Sydney suffer from the worst air quality in the entire city, largely as a result of emissions from cars and trucks. The lack of quality public transport has created a pattern of growing car dependency. It is a bitter irony that those residents worst affected by air pollution are also those with the fewest transport options. Often there is simply no viable alternative to

driving. In many cases this means that households are forced to have two or more vehicles.

Apart from increasing air pollution and health effects, this also imposes a severe financial burden. It has been estimated that the cost of a second car for a family in the outer suburbs over the course of a working lifetime is in the order of \$350 000. It has also been estimated that building a 2 car garage instead of a single car garage adds approximately \$50,000 to the construction and mortgage costs of a house.

Of course if you are unable to drive, too young to have a licence, or cannot afford a car then your prospects for being able to move around for employment, entertainment or other purposes are very grim indeed.

LAND CLEARING > solution in sight

Sometimes a big issue suddenly breaks into solution mode. The scene was set when in late 2002, Premier Bob Carr invited the eminent Wentworth Group, comprised of the nation's top environment and natural resource scientists, to advise him on land clearing.

But first, how did we get to the impasse?

Despite a good start with SEPP 46, an overnight planning policy introduced in 1996, to require development consent for land clearing (and now infamous in the bush) - it was downhill in the following years. Environmentalists had to battle to retain consent controls over clearing (the farmers saw it as an ideological attack on freehold rights) but eventually the Native Vegetation Conservation Act was passed.

It ushered in the maladministration of vegetation law by the Department of Land and Water Conservation. Tens of thousand of hectares were cleared each year and almost 600 instances of alleged illegal clearing went unanswered. The

regional vegetation committee process was badly managed. Last year the Audit Office issued a damning report on the department.

Then the Wentworth Group came onto the scene. Even though they vowed they were not commissioned to facilitate a consensus between farmers and the environment movement, the dynamic of the meetings between the stakeholders and the interrogation of the Wentworth Group, meant that genuine dialogue was achieved.

The Wentworth Group reported in early February. Its key proposals included:

- Cessation of broadscale land clearing of remnant vegetation and high conservation value regrowth.
- There are too many exemptions under the current arrangements and they must be reduced to a minimal amount.
- The main exemption process in the future (for selective clearing of remnant vegetation and protected regrowth with clear environmental gain) should be via a certified property management plan of up to 10 years, linked to environmental standards.

- Statewide environmental standards for biodiversity and catchment protection are necessary.
- financial assistance to farmers of \$120m over four years.
- Institutional reforms are absolutely required. The skills and culture of DLWC are not appropriate to this new model.

The devil is in the detail. However, it was a far-reaching report and lays the groundwork for a significant rapprochement between farmers and environmentalists.

In a strange turn of events, the Premier released the report on the 18th February, in one of the most confusing media releases ever seen. It was only till you reached the end of the second page that the government announced it had committed \$120m and that it was in broad agreement with the report! An unusual 'toe in the water' approach.

The non-political however was over taken with clear community to the new model in the Election campaign.



Vertical Exhausts

Leigh Martin, Urban Campaigner

A crazy and irresponsible attempt to overturn a fundamental clean air regulation late last year clearly demonstrates the need for environment groups to remain vigilant.

In response to pressure from the trucking industry a Government MP introduced a motion seeking to disallow a clause of the State Government's **Protection of the Environment (Clean Air - Motor Vehicles and Motor Vehicles Fuels) Regulation 2002** requiring diesel vehicles over 4.5 tonnes to be fitted with vertical exhausts. Vertical exhausts do not reduce emissions from diesel vehicles, however, they direct exhausts higher into the air, allowing greater dispersal and reducing the exposure of pedestrians, cyclists and other road users to highly dangerous, fine particle pollution.

If successful, the resolution would have turned the clock back 26 years on diesel exhausts and placed at risk the health of all other road users and the community at large.

The vertical exhaust requirement has been in place since 1976 and was renewed in the new regulation which was gazetted on 4 September 2002. In recognition of improvements to engine technology, vehicles to be manufactured after 2007, which will comply with the strict Australian Design Rule (ADR) 80/01 (Euro 4) emission standards, were exempted from the regulation. These vehicles will produce particulate emissions around 94% lower than current models, eliminating the need for vertical exhausts.

If passed by Parliament, however, the disallowance motion would have meant that heavy diesels would no longer have been required to have vertical exhausts whether they met the new standard or not.

TEC responded by calling on the Minister for the Environment to oppose the motion. Fortunately common sense prevailed and the resolution was withdrawn. However, in a cynical attempt to curry favour with trucking industry, the Opposition attempted to resurrect the motion in the Upper House. TEC again responded, urging the Government to vote against the motion and seeking the assistance of Cross Bench Members to ensure its defeat.

Facing little chance of success the resolution was not debated in the Upper House and lapsed when the Parliamentary session finished. As a result vertical exhausts will still be required on all heavy diesels that do not meet Euro 4 emission standards.

A Social History of TEC

Soon we will begin assembling information for a social history of TEC.

We hope to contact those with a TEC association in the last 30 years to make oral, written and photographic contributions. What were your experiences? Did you work on a campaign? Were you a volunteer or paid staff member? How do you think TEC has grown and developed? What do you think TEC has achieved? Have we made mistakes? Etc. Your stories and impressions are most welcome.

As material is gathered we will seek funding and a writer to turn the project into print. So please start reflecting and remembering with a view to being part of this assemblage of a unique social history.

If you wish to register interest in participating, please write to Sue at TEC 2/362 Kent St Sydney 2000 or email: manx@tec.org.au

AN IMPORTANT VOLUNTEER JOB AT TEC

TEC needs a receptionist to work on Fridays from 10am to about 5pm. Help answer the phones; take messages; greet visitors to the office and assist with mailouts and filing.

Be part of our environment action team!

Contact Anthony at TEC on 9299 5599.

Tweed – old tricks

Tweed Shire Council released an EIS for a key upgrade of the Kingscliffe Sewerage Plant over the Christmas/New year holiday period – a typical developers trick to reduce community oversight. The plant is a fundamental infrastructure enhancement to support more coastal development. As readers of 'Total Environment' will know, Tweed is one of the worst developer councils in NSW.

TEC wrote to the Minister for Planning seeking his support in extending the public exhibition period. He agreed with our concerns and requested the Council give the public several more weeks to respond.

Lake Wollumboola saved!

After many years of campaigning by local environment groups, TEC and other supporters, the NSW Government has declared, Lake Wollumboola as part of the Jervis Bay National Park.

The Lake and its catchment are situated in the Shoalhaven Council area, renowned for aggressive pro development policies. In past years, up to 3,000 homes were proposed for its immediate catchment and foreshores – guaranteed to wreck water quality and aquatic ecology.

TEC welcomed the declaration as timely and enhanced the government's commitment to coastal protection.

The Lake's value is unquestionable. It is the south coast's largest shallow saline lagoon, is near pristine, surrounded by bushland, and supports an extraordinary diverse ecosystems. It has also been listed as internationally important wetland, and migratory bird habitat. In addition it provides numerous opportunities for recreational enjoyment and is loved by visitors and locals alike.



New staff and goodbyes

Welcome to **Alison Rose** and **Anthony Lazzaro** who are joining **Dave West** in our Green Capital team. Dave has been appointed the Manager of Green Capital after working with TEC last year in setting up this increasingly successful activity.

And to **Jane Castle** as our new Resource Conservation Campaigner. Jane will be tackling extended producer responsibility (returning waste to the producer) and our demand management push, to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gases.

Farewell to **Jeanette Neave** who has been with us for several years as Information and Volunteers Officer. She also worked on our waste campaign and paid special attention to TEC's own office waste generation and recycling.

Our long term volunteer receptionist **Joyce Ladkin** has decided to retire to live nearer her family in Newcastle. We will miss her consistent and valuable help.

MARCIA WOOD

TEC was saddened to hear of the passing of Marcia Wood, our office secretary in the founding days of the early 1970's.

Marcia did all the typing for a small but busy office. In those days with no computers, spell checks and automatic layout, it was a skilled task to get it right the first time. She stayed with TEC until the 1990s and as a devoted assistant to our first Director, Milo Dunphy. We are grateful to have had her help in the battle to save the environment.

The Coastal Horrors



TEC Natural Areas Campaigner Fran Kelly spent a parts of October 2002 through to January 2003 touring the length of the NSW coastline to meet local groups, look at and learn first hand, the range of inappropriate developments, clearing, rezonings, etc going on. She found that no matter where she went the story was the same.

The ways and wiles of developers as they seek out, transform and sell coastal land with views, oceanfronts, foreshores, "private" beaches, coastal lakes, wetlands or river frontage, and bushland are monotonously repetitive from north to south. They find the beauty to subdivide, develop and sell, then destroy the very thing they use to entice people to buy. Rarely does a full-scale new residential estate or tourist resort show the potential customer the reality – a fully cleared moonscape or "dead zone" where once there was wildlife.

Welcome to NSW – once was coastal bushland now is rapidly becoming coastal concrete. Despite all the laws and regulations, state, local and federal – good planning has never been so much pushed to one side on such a broad scale as the demands of developers and other vested interests take precedence.

Aided in this is the demand for coastal land. There are an increasing number of retirees with plenty of money and needing somewhere to put it now investment returns are either too shakey or too low. A general manic rush by all ages to get hold of a piece of coastal land before it is too late. The outpricing for many of city real estate driving them further afield; retirees cashed up; and a rising population in general.

Big impacts

A recent report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics warns of the impact of a growing population and demand on the coast's resources. Excess nutrient concentrations and sediment, loss of habitat, weed and pest infestation are cited as some of the by-products of urban development in coastal areas. Other general themes ring alarm bells:

- The loss of huge swathes and small remnants of natural bushland, within, and between population settlements as urban estates sprawl and take over and as the trend for large concrete only homes and yards sets in.
- The loss of public Crown and Council-owned land to development either because it is being sold or developed by the relevant Council or Department of Land and Water Conservation (in charge of Crown Land) or because vacant Crown land is being successfully claimed by regional Aboriginal Land Councils some of which opt to sell it to developers or develop it themselves, rather than preserving it as a reserve.

- The only fully protected land remaining – the national park estate – is under increasing pressure from fires, access, commercial activities neighbouring activities, feral and weed problems etc as clearing and development around the parks increases, wildlife corridors and links if they existed disappear, and the parks themselves become increasingly isolated.

Coastal NSW. It's wild and beautiful one minute, gone the next.

- Land clearing both legal (under the Native Vegetation Conservation Act or DA approvals) and illegal is rampant, rarely stopped or controlled and prosecutions are extremely rare. Pre-emptive clearing of land to destroy its environmental values and help gain development consent, using both fire hazard and weed control, as excuses are common. As is clearing into public protected land.
- Clearing of foreshore and dune vegetation for views leaving settlements behind them vulnerable as beaches and cliffs erode.
- The transformation of coastal villages and towns from well planned, unobtrusive settlements into a string of Gone with the Wind style mansions, and sprawling concrete only estates
- The loss of low-key caravan parks, whose usual absolute coastal front locations have made them prime targets for development into permanent "cabins" or resorts.

Developer councils

The extent of developer-led destruction (or progress depending on your viewpoint) depends on the co-operation gained by developers from a majority of nine to twelve people – often real estate developers themselves – that sit in the council chambers every fortnight or so deciding on their region's future. Conflict of interest? – Hard to prove but often present even if it is only that nudge, nudge wink, wink 'agreement' or 'advice' in a bar between a senior planning manager, councillor and developer. Local Environment Plans become plans for development. Council wide planning strategies become maps with sections earmarked rezoning for more development.

Every council or shire has some or all of the above happening. In the far north, Tweed has already approved new suburbs for thousands – new resorts to compete with the Gold Coast – and has welcomed the return of the White Shoe Brigade with a vengeance ever since a pro-developer block got elected to council with financial help from major developers. Further down the north coast, Ballina, Richmond, Maclean, Pristine Waters, Nambucca, Hastings, Taree and Great Lakes are filling up their green spaces within towns, developing or rezoning what is left outside for urban sprawl, and generally welcoming all development regardless of infrastructure and land ability to cope with it.

In the south, Bega land owners eagerly await their chance to subdivide and develop from south of Eden to Wallaga Lake. In some areas all they need is reticulated sewage and they have the green light. In Eurobodalla several large estates with coastal frontage are awaiting the go ahead, while in Shoalhaven at Culburra Beach even huge fore dunes have been excavated for views.

A blueprint

However hope springs eternal. In Wollongong a Federal Seat was won by the Greens largely on an anti-coastal development platform after the Council and Government remained deaf to concerns over coastal development there. In the National Party controlled Tweed, residents have formed groups and alliances that will be a formidable force at the next council elections in September. In Shoalhaven persistent lobbying for protected lands such as around Vincentia and Lake Wollumboola have resulted in the declaration of new national parks land and the calling in by State Planning Minister Andrew Refshauge of some of the worst excesses of development. And, although it has yet to prove itself a meaningful policy – the Coastal Protection SEPP 71 is a step in the right direction.

But what is needed desperately is a coast wide planning blueprint that says absolutely and unambiguously what can and cannot be developed, that cannot be challenged and inevitably defeated in the Land and Environment Court, something that applies everywhere that states unequivocally "NO!" to development around coastal lakes, wetlands and rivers, on foreshores, headlands and creeks – on steep slopes and other sensitive areas. A plan that prevents the creeping sprawl that joins up villages along the coast but looks instead at appropriate places for new more sustainable low key settlements.

GM CROPS TO LOCK-IN PESTICIDE USE INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM



The Federal Government seems determined to release genetically engineered products into Australia without conducting adequate environmental, economic or health risk assessments. TEC is particularly concerned at the lack of assessment on changing pesticide and herbicide use through the introduction of Roundup Ready (RR) canola.

RR canola is seed that has been genetically engineered to be able to withstand exposure to glyphosate. Glyphosate is the world's largest selling herbicide with the majority of sales to its largest manufacturer, Monsanto.

The overriding concern with the introduction of pesticide/herbicide resistant crops is that it locks the cultivation of food into the use of agricultural chemicals. This undermines the use of modern non-chemical based farming methods such as organic and integrated pest management (IPM). Organic and IPM farming systems are far more sensitive to the surrounding ecological constraints.

More specifically the release of RR canola could result in the cross pollination of

the glyphosate-tolerant gene to create superweeds. Recent findings from the University of Adelaide confirmed these fears as they showed DNA from the chloroplast of GM crops could move into the nucleus and therefore be passed on through their pollen (Nature, 6/2/03). The cross pollination of weeds with

Both the ALP and the Coalition have announced a moratorium on GM food crops as state election policy

glyphosate resistant genes would result in weeds that were capable of surviving numerous pesticide applications. As a result the older, persistent herbicides would be reintroduced with grave risks to the environment.

Other concerns include the increased use of glyphosate with key environmental problems including its longevity in damp, organic soils and its toxicity to soil micro-organisms and mycorrhizas.

TEC has made an FOI request to obtain all correspondence between the National Registration Authority (that examines pesticides) and the Gene Technology Regulator in relation to the risk assessment process of RR canola.

To voice your concern about the introduction of GM crops please write to the Office of Gene Technology Regulator, PO Box 100, Woden, ACT 2600 or visit its website at www.ogtr.gov.au for specific risk assessment submissions.

NOTIFICATION IN RURAL AREAS

Ben Cole, Chemicals Campaigner



Pesticide applications are the largest proportion of deliberate releases of chemicals into our environment. Exposure to pesticide applications can occur through touching sprayed surfaces and through spray drift travelling through the air. The community has a right to know about pesticide applications that may drift or are applied onto public lands, in their vicinity.

The right to know campaign is coming to a head with TEC demanding urgent attention from the Government to develop regulations that will provide prior notification about key pesticide applications in both urban and rural situations.

Notification allows the community to make informed decisions about the risk associated with pesticide spraying within their area. This information is particularly important to sensitive groups such as children, pregnant women, sick, elderly and organic farmers. Notification empowers the community with the information required to argue for more appropriate and safer spray regimes.

Notification has been proven to work both internationally and in other parts of Australia. In New York City commercial

applicators must provide 48 hours' advance written notice to occupants of neighbouring dwellings with property lines within 150 feet of the application. Canberra residents are given up to one week's notice of Council spraying activities and can veto their property from being sprayed. Many other examples exist where notification has been granted to the community.

The opponents to notification argue that there is no evidence of human or environmental degradation through spray drift. A closer inspection of the scientific evidence reveals that numerous studies have shown high levels of pesticides are entering our bodies. One of the most disturbing studies was conducted by researchers based at Queensland University, which found numerous pesticides in the blood stream of newly born children.

The need for pesticide notification is particularly important in rural regions where applications of pesticides cover a wide area and are delivered in high volumes. Unfortunately farmer and pesticide application groups have been reluctant to appreciate the rights of the community and have persistently blocked the progression of a rural-based notification regulation.

TEC is lobbying the State Government to develop a rural notification regulation. Sensitive sites should be provided with an adequate notification zone to ensure they are protected. The community should not have to request this information, but rather the pesticide applicator should develop a clear strategy for informing them.

HOT NEWS

TEC's Spray Drift Reporting Kit has gone global. The Swamp Watch Action Team, a US based non-profit grass roots organization contacted us about our notification campaign. After a few emails back and forth we sent them a copy of our Spray Drift Reporting Kit. They liked it so much they reproduced it with a few changes and distributed it across the state of North Carolina!

Our Spray Drift Kit can be found on the tec website – www.tec.nccnsw.org.au/member/tec/reference/spraydriftkit/

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.

I would like to volunteer to help TEC with:

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- Stalls
- Research / submission writing
- Office work (eg mail outs)
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- Other

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My environmental interests are

I am available (per week) half day one day
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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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