

**TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE  
ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2009-10**  
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## CLIMATE CHANGE

The politics of climate change have gone through severe gyrations in the last 12 months...major party turmoil seeing a change in leaders; collapse of the ETS; direct action and do nothing plans; severe loss of public support for the PM; then an election where neither major party had a credible policy...but the hung result means that a carbon price is back on the agenda!

TEC worked in three areas not well served by other advocacy groups:

**Energy Efficiency** – still the best win-win strategy but remaining neglected by federal government. Our main achievement was the Energy Efficiency Communique signed by over 40 business, union and NGO groups following our campaign roundtable. The effort fed into the PM's Energy Efficiency Taskforce.

We were also a constant media presence on the subject particularly drawing attention to the exorbitant and costly investment plans by the fossil fuel industry in new generation and transmission. This is the main cause (not a carbon cost) of recent power prices. A significant portion of the expenditure (locking in carbon emissions) can be avoided through efficiency measures.

A key item in our meetings with ministers and regulators was to promote the extension of the successful NSW energy savings scheme which imposes a target on retailers to a national system - but to also apply it to distributors so that they invest in energy efficiency rather than more poles and wires to deliver more (expensive) electricity.

**National Electricity Market** – the NEM remains a fortress of narrow energy policy but we believe we are beginning to make inroads. In addition to a resistant bureaucracy it has been protected by the Ministerial Council on Energy. However recently the ministers warned the NEM that it must change to better embrace energy efficiency.

TEC also participated in several consultations on bringing renewables into the system and smart meters. We also understand that the PM's Taskforce has drawn attention to the failings of the NEM and when this is released by the new Gillard government it should add to the reform momentum.

**Carbon Offsets, GreenPower** – these 'early' voluntary climate change moves are still important but

as reported last year government did not appear able to accord them appropriate recognition. However the last gasp negotiations with the ETS improved the situation (but then the ETS collapsed), but recently there have been government proposals to recognise GreenPower purchases by business. We await the next instalment.

## NEW MOVES ON RECYCLING

Our work with environment groups and recyclers was successful with the Rudd government's release of the National Waste Policy and subsequent Implementation Plan. Much credit goes to Environment Minister, Peter Garrett. The National Recycling Initiative held a Summit where industry, NGO and council groups agreed on priority policies which will form the basis for ongoing lobbying.

A major achievement was the agreement of the nation's environment ministers to commission a regulatory impact statement into container deposits – a real advance from the previous procrastination. The next 12 months will see a major campaign to bring about a positive decision.

We are also closely involved in the development of the national e-waste recycling scheme with a particular focus on recovery targets and recycling standards. The scheme is due to start in 2011 but without the passage of the umbrella Product Stewardship Act, it cannot proceed. Our lobbying along with recyclers, the TV and computer industries was successful in gaining 'A' status (ie, priority introduction into parliament) for the legislation but then the federal election intervened. It must be passed this year.

Our efforts on the National Packaging Covenant bore fruit with a new Australian Packaging Covenant now concentrating on product design and use of recycle by its 600 signatories. Another advance was the introduction of landfill levies in Queensland and higher levies in Victoria; but a reverse was a NSW government decision to lift the cap on waste allowed for the huge Woodlawn tip and replace it with an untested policy. The Kennally government will have to lift its game on recycling as NSW is slipping behind good practice in other states.

## PROMOTING THE GREEN ECONOMY

TEC is one of a few environment groups actively engaging in the green economy debate. As part of our Green Capital program and its events we produced 'The Emerging Green Economy', a 'Carbon Action Survey of Business' for our 'Doing Nothing Is Not An Option' event and a 10-point agenda for the federal election.

We also produced 'CARB-EN, The Carbon and Energy Action Quick Check for Business' which takes a company through an easy rating process of sustainability behaviours. A number of workshops were undertaken.

Green Capital organised the following events:

The Emerging Green Economy – where to now?; Women in Climate Change; Solution or Sidetrack – carbon capture and storage in the spotlight; Doing Nothing is not an Option...but what now for carbon action?; Politics of Sustainability – what it means for business, community and government.

## KEEPING RIVERS ALIVE

The Tillegra Dam fight rolls on as Hunter Water continues its plan to wreck the Williams River. It appears its fate will depend on the outcome of the NSW election next March.

The Snowy received a better hearing this year. Its threatened status was recognised by the NSW Scientific Committee charged with independent listing of endangered communities. There was also good news in the federal ALP Election Policy with a promise to provide environmental flows previously locked out by the 'Mowamba loan clause'. Since the NSW government did nothing to improve the river's fate with the new Snowy Water Licence - we eagerly await Commonwealth action.

TEC continued the long fight ('Don't Drain Them Dry') to stop the impacts of underground longwall mining where rivers are cracked; swamps drained; and cliffs destroyed. The BHP Bulli extension will also harm valuable wetlands and Dharwal Conservation Area. We provided a major submission accompanied by a special report on the (unlikely) capacity to rehabilitate wetlands after mining damage. Half of the company's response to public submissions was devoted to a (feeble) attempt to rebut our arguments. The potential environmental impacts are so significant that the Commonwealth government has called for a further environmental impact statement under federal law.

TEC also took action on the proposed Wyong mine with particular reference to its approach to risk management. In order to try to be in advance of the next longwall we have begun the '3 rivers' campaign to counter a massive exploration proposal under the Avon, Cordeaux and Nepean gorges in the East Bargo area.

Finally we received (and released) a number of confidential company documents revealing plans to mine gas in and around Sydney's drinking water catchments. They revealed a cowboy approach and an attempt by longwall miners to hide the connection between coal mining and gas drilling including by the controversial 'fracking' technique that uses toxic chemicals pumped into the aquifers to free up the gas.

## URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

A major focus was air quality and in addition to our fourth review of Action for Air (which found policies had slightly improved) we participated in reviews of air quality standards. It is no exaggeration to claim that

air pollution is a long running public health emergency whose length will be determined by how much public transport is built.

An associated topic is the planning system which despite producing impressive strategies allows short sighted development. There is an ongoing lack of concern for future generations, sustainability and public participation. Our joint report with the Environmental Defenders Office based on 8 workshops and investigation of best practice, found a high level of public cynicism and disconnect to planning. This is justified but entirely unhealthy for good long term outcomes. The Planning Department has agreed to prepare an 'action plan' with TEC and the EDO.

## MAJOR REPORTS

- *Demand Management and Energy Policy: a case study of NSW*
- *Carbon Action Survey of Business*
- *CARB-EN - The Carbon and Energy Action Quick Check for Business*
- *Contamination and Resource Recovery in Australia (for DECCW)*
- *Review of Bulli Seam Operations environmental assessment (Australian Wetlands Consulting)*
- *Reconnecting the Community with the Planning System (EDO)*

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**Government Committees** – TEC staff were members of: Millenium Parklands Advisory Committee; Natural Resources Advisory Council; Lord Howe Island Board; Biobanking Ministerial Reference Group; Climate Change Fund Advisory Committee; National Packaging Covenant Council; Product Stewardship Legislation Advisory Committee. Television and Computer Scheme Stakeholder Reference Group.

**Environmental Management** – during the year TEC purchased 50% GreenPower and 50% Gold Standard offsets; adopted an action plan on paper, containers and recycling under the National Packaging Covenant; and introduced office composting bin (Bokashi).

## and THANKS TO OUR DONORS!