



# Annual Report of Activities 2012 – 2013

*The cycle of social change swings like a pendulum; and that is certainly the case as more conservative governments are elected in Australia. Policies particularly for the natural environment are under threat as the rural and mining elements push to wind back 'green tape'. But local MPs and governments can't ignore the community's wish for environmental sustainability. During the last 12 months TEC, which has entered its 40th year, used its campaigning experience to build new campaigns and find a way forward.*

## Recycling – more to do

TEC is the pre-eminent NGO on the zero waste push. When governments want a view or a member of a steering committee, or industry and the media want to know what the environment movement supports – they come to us. We have a very long history in the area – be it opposing landfills, scrutinising waste to energy or recycling of electronic items – but there's more to do to conserve resources and reduce pollution.

We were appointed to the national Product Stewardship Advisory Committee which recommends products for action. We are the nerve centre for the Boomerang Alliance of 27 groups and the container deposits (CDS) campaign.

In the last year TEC focussed on several issues including the rollout of the e-waste recycling scheme and handheld batteries – but most prominently the 10cent deposit on drink containers. Boomerang and TEC are confronted by a well funded and connected industry lobby including the Australian Food and Grocery Council and Coca Cola. However the campaign is still moving forwards with the support of hundreds of thousands of people and it appears to us that the industry effort is stalling.

The aim is to legislate for a national CD system; or failing that, introduction by individual states. The ultimately successful implementation of a CDS in the Northern Territory (after Coca Cola won a temporary court ban), which has



seen recycling grow by 170% and litter reduce by 50% - was a major win. The push for an extended CDS is the third effort by the community in 30 years. Environment ministers are expected to make a decision by the end of 2013.

We finally launched our Waste Not interactive website with its videos, history of waste and school curriculum guides.

## Electricity goes green

As reported last year governments and regulators have finally woken up to the virtues of energy efficiency. Renewables are also gaining ground. Major reforms are now in the pipeline.

Again TEC is the key green NGO player in the National Electricity Market. We released an analysis of the carbon intensity of the energy supplies of individual retailers; supported local community networks; worked with regional groups to oppose unnecessary (and expensive) transmission upgrades; and began development of 'virtual network metering' to support better financial treatment of small renewable networks.



While we are still waiting for the full NSW Renewable Energy Strategy – the release of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan contained some positive elements. Importantly its 2020 targets combined with the 20% renewable energy target will cancel expected growth in consumption and reduce the fossil fuel share of generation.

However we are opposing the burning of trees for electricity which has reappeared on government agendas. Not only will it cause more greenhouse gas emissions, but it will finance more logging and land clearing. TEC will be taking its case to consumers, asking them to tell their retailer they reject this source of power.

Undoubtedly the election of an Abbott government will stimulate more debate on climate change – the new national government does not have mandate to ignore global warming. TEC will join in the defence of having a price on carbon.

## Green Capital transforms

Our Green Capital program has been revamped to focus on 'building sustainable economies'. It now has five elements – Forums for debates; Hothouse for greater collaboration and interaction; Frontiers for our IP and publications; a broader Network; and Masterclass for training in sustainability transformation. You will recall we had previously focussed on big events but Green Capital became aware corporate budget restrictions were limiting attendance and that we needed to become more of a 'campaign movement' for sustainable economies.

We also completed the 'Buying Better' project which delineated the most 'material' or important environmental impacts of four product areas – printer paper, small electronics, cleaning products and beef. The results are intended to influence what should appear on labels marketing green credentials; and have been supplied to industry and the ACCC.

Green Capital organised the following events: 'Where to now for a Green Economy?'; 'Buying Better v Greenwash'; 'Phoenix Effect' and 'Power Game'.

## Protecting the laws that protect nature

The last 15 years saw major advances in nature conservation legislation. Elements in the rural sector didn't like it. Nor did the emerging shooters and fishers political party or dinosaur factions of the mining and property development industries. With the election of Liberal and National Parties to government the push to wind back progressive laws has begun.

Queensland and Victoria were the first to move, but New South Wales is not far behind. As one of the originators of the Native Vegetation (2003) and Threatened Species Conservation (1995) Acts TEC is determined to defend them. Already the O'Farrell government has weakened the essential Native Vegetation Regulation that governs clearing applications. Now it has announced a wholesale review of all nature legislation over the next two years. We are preparing a major campaign called 'Living Landscapes'.



Mining continues to pose significant challenges as this wealthy, one-eyed industry pushes for special treatment from government. Farmers and environmental groups are now often on the same side when opposing damaging projects. No matter how much money a mine might make for consolidated revenue or local employment, nothing trumps protection of our water supply and threatened species and bushland. Not all mines should get the go-ahead.

## Planning for what?

Planning and development approval laws have been under the spotlight at both federal and state levels. Business is pushing hard to remove 'duplication' and reduce Commonwealth intervention in favour of state approaches. But at the same time states are attacking so-called 'green tape'. The end result could well be a system that universally prioritises short term economic activity over long term sustainability.



TEC worked with key NSW groups to improve current NSW proposals to write a new planning act. At issue is retaining the ESD definition; lack of retention for existing environment protection policies; one-stop shop and loss of concurrence power from expert agencies; the gap between 'community participation' in strategic planning and the rights of developers to evade such plans; and defining 'low risk' development that avoids community and neighbour consultation. In relation to integrating the environment into planning we also produced a briefing on cumulative air pollution and development decision making; and exposed the dangers of allowing further urban sprawl in Sydney.



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