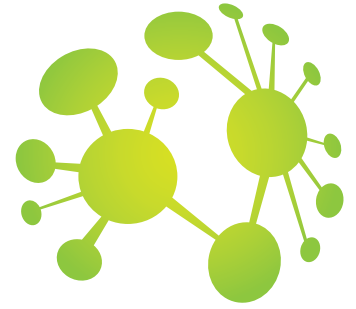


# TOTAL ENVIRONMENT NEWS



for the future

2014 / ISSUE 1

## Editorial

**You could not have missed Tony Abbott's claim that 'too much forest is locked up in national parks' – he was using megaphone politics to influence the Tasmanian election where the Liberals are hoping to get a majority.**

Yet the conservatives in Canberra are simply echoing the other Liberal-National state governments whose policies include recent moves to favour commercial and recreational fishing in marine parks over sanctuary zones, even though sanctuaries are the only assured way to benefit fish stocks and marine diversity.

Clearly the powerful mining and developer interests and extreme recreational groups have found their dream political partners, after suffering significant advances in nature conservation by successive Labor governments. No doubt there's more to come with the review of the Renewable Energy Target; an inquiry into environmental regulation and private property rights by Attorney-General Brandis; ongoing green tape rationalization; and removal of the carbon tax.

It's as if they are creating a vacuum into which all good green policies are

sucked – never to be seen again.

But this is a democracy and there's no such thing as a vacuum. The void left by the removal of much-needed environment protection policies will be filled by ever growing community anger ready to be mobilised in mass campaigns and at elections. Conservative governments may not want local, state and national environment groups speaking up, loud and persistently to the wider community – but they can't stop them. They can't hide millions of tonnes of spoil dumped on the Great Barrier Reef. They can't expect the Tasmanian forests agreement to be 'torn up' and then somehow avoid the spotlight for the further collapse of the timber industry as buyers turn away. They can't weaken land clearing controls so that millions of hectares are opened up to erosion and loss of threatened species, and expect no-one to notice.

Neighbourhoods and rural communities will see valued natural (and allied economic) assets being destroyed and they will know who to blame. That's one of the problems of ideological, sloganistic policy making. You make the lens through which policy is seen bleeding obvious – and obviously repugnant.



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# Your Urban Sanctuary?

Our veteran campaigner **Dave Burgess** spells out TEC's plan to introduce more breathing space to create a saner Sydney

The past decade has seen dramatic changes to planning policy in New South Wales, and the impact is starting to mount before our very eyes. Unfettered development is already compromising the air quality and biodiversity of the cityscape. Less and less elbow-room is already testing the sanity of Sydney's swelling population. Without a serious challenge to the drift in policy, the very features that have made Sydney one of the most liveable, and beautiful cities in the world will not survive into the next decade, let alone the next century.

The key culprit is the erosion of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979) under successive ALP governments. More aggressive weakening of environmental protection laws is now occurring under the present coalition. This government's reform of the Act and changes to other policy instruments pose environmental threats across the state as a whole. But the reform also presents a new set of dangers to Sydney's urban public spaces, parks and remnant bushland.

These include big housing developments on the urban fringe, operational land being sold off, and commercial leasing within public parks. Changes at a local government

level will lead to increasing floor space ratios that will continue to fragment Sydney's green space and impinge on habitat, reducing in turn the biodiversity of the city's flora and fauna. While the City of Sydney is a world leader in greening the CBD, developers are not thinking about what our city will be like to live in ten, twenty or thirty years time.

In response to these imminent threats, TEC has created the Urban Sanctuary campaign to foster an urgently-needed long-term vision for our remnant bushland and parkland. It's first objective is to address the new (and older) threats to the urban environment brought about by poor planning policy. We believe it's high time for both sides of government to place a real value on Sydney's cherished public spaces, our world famous scenic vistas, our bushland retreats and parks. TEC will be campaigning hard to put policies and precinct planning in place that will give nature a chance, and residents more vital space to breathe. We hope you'll get behind this initiative. We think it's one of our most important campaigns for 2014.

**TEC's Urban Sanctuary campaign will be launched in May this year.**

**“We are facing a new set of dangers to our urban green spaces”**

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## Playing the water game...

Most of us take water for granted, but supply is highly politicized. Campaigner, **Leigh Martin** investigates competition in the NSW water industry

The NSW Government has released a position paper on a review of urban water regulations including the Water Industry Competition Act 2006 (WICA). Its key objective is to ease pressure on drinking water supplies by promoting the development of alternative sources of water such as recycling and stormwater harvesting.

To ensure that WICA encourages the development of these alternative sources of water, section 10(4)(d) of the Act requires new entrants to the water industry to 'obtain sufficient quantities of water other than from a

public water utility'. This means that they cannot simply purchase drinking

**“This retail model will promote sales at the expense of water conservation, and drought security...”**

water from public utilities and on-sell it to retail customers.

The NSW Government proposes to repeal this section of WICA and allow new entrants to compete with public utilities for the right to service industrial and larger commercial

customers, without developing alternative water sources. This will significantly reduce the chances of converting these customers to alternative supplies (which would ease demand on potable water supplies).

It is also proposed to allow new entrants to provide for retail services (billing and metering) to residential and small commercial customers in new greenfield and infill developments.

The result of these changes will be to move away from regulation designed to promote alternative sources of

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# TRASHY SELFIES COLLECT FANS

*The Container Deposit campaign continues to gain nation wide momentum despite the slow response of environment ministers, reports TEC's indefatigable waste campaigner, **Lisa Wriley**.*



Committed people around Australia are always picking up rubbish left by other, careless individuals. Clean Up Australia day is their big day, when a combined effort makes the media sit up and take notice.

This year TEC teamed with Greenpeace and Clean Up Australia to call on all Australians to take a 'Trashy Selfie', ie a self portrait with a used bottle or can and share it with Greenpeace via

[www.stoptrashingaustralia.org](http://www.stoptrashingaustralia.org) or social media using the 'handle': #trashyselfie (people who tweet and have modern phones know what this means!). Check out the website to see some of the best.

Meanwhile, the beautiful Great Ocean Road is carpeted with bottle litter, like most other roads around Australia (except South Australia and increasingly NT). This is Premier Napthine's electorate, and there are many of his constituents who support a Container Deposit System, as TEC discovered on the weekend of 22/23 February. The

**“the beautiful Great Ocean Road is carpeted with bottle litter, like most Australian roads”**

Friends of Merri Marine Sanctuary and the Warrnambool Environmental Action group welcomed our campaigners, and intend to keep up the pressure.

A letter writing stall at the local Warrnambool Sustainable Living Festival was also set up by Silke and Paul from Two Hands Project, an active Boomerang Alliance member group. 185 letters were written to Premier

Napthine and leftover template letters were taken to the local school to distribute to families.

We are not going to give up the fight for national or state based container Deposit Scheme/s.

See the Cash for Containers facebook page for the photos of this and other Actions.

**You can also take action at [www.boomerangalliance.org.au](http://www.boomerangalliance.org.au).**

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water toward a system of retail competition. This has serious implications for water conservation, and drought security. Adoption of such a model in the energy industry has encouraged retailers to promote increased sales at the expense of demand management.

The proposed changes to WICA may also be a stalking horse for privatisation of public water utilities. Extending competition for billing and metering services to residential and small commercial customers in already developed areas will open the way to privatisation of existing

retailers. The government's position paper does not preclude eventually allowing new entrants to compete for retail services in these areas; stating only that this will not occur "at this stage".

# BURNING DOWN THE RET

When is wood waste not waste? **Mark Byrne**, our energy advocate analyses the Abbott government's Renewable Energy Target review

Most of the response to the Abbott government's RET review has focused on the ideologically hostile members of the review panel, and the likelihood that the target will be gutted. But Australia's beleaguered native forests could also face another threat: "...the Government's election commitment to reinstate native forest wood waste as an eligible renewable energy source."

Wood waste is already eligible for LGCs, but it is defined in the RET Regulations as "sawmill residue, other than sawmill residue derived from biomass from a native forest."

This clause is a result of a Labor-Greens-Independents deal. The environment movement believed that electricity generation could become the equivalent of the woodchip industry in terms of destructive environmental impacts. (Rob Oakeshott originally agreed with the Greens. He later changed his mind and took the side of the forestry industry, which has a long history in his former electorate of Lyne.)

A similar move is already underway in NSW, where environmental regulations currently prohibit the burning of native forest residue for electricity generation. But a pending review proposes to allow the burning of native forest logs for this purpose. The forestry industry claims that it would not be economic to use sawlogs (as opposed to pulplogs) just for the dollar value of the energy generated in the wholesale market, because their value as electricity would be no more than the cost of felling and transporting them to mill furnaces.

This is probably true. However, the economics would be greatly improved if native forest logs could also generate LGCs (especially if these return to their historical average price of around \$35/tonne), and if the energy could be sold into the spot market during periods of peak demand, when prices can reach many times their current average of under \$50 per MWh.

**"electricity generation could become the equivalent of the woodchip industry"**

The forestry industry also claims that the offcuts from native forest logging can already be burnt in situ, so it makes sense to turn them into something of economic value at the mill, especially if the electricity replaces fossil-fueled power. It is going to be difficult, however, to ensure that a new market for logging operations is not created by the added value of 'dead koala electricity'.

Of course it would be better for our rapidly dwindling koala populations

and other native forest biota, if offcuts were left in situ as habitat; or, even better, if multi-aged native forest were not logged in the first place. All of our demand for forest products could be met by plantation timbers, and it's already happening. Nearly 90 per cent of forest products in Australia are now derived from plantations.

If habitat loss for koalas and attendant biodiversity are not enough to worry about, burning trees which store carbon for decades if not centuries is a very inefficient way to generate energy. It has been calculated that this produces three times the greenhouse emissions of a coal-fired power station over 200 years, especially given the loss of carbon in old-growth native forests.

And it is up to four times more expensive than coal-fired power. Estimates I have seen for the cost of electricity generated from native forests logs (without LGCs) are in the order of \$10-20 per MWh.

In the best case scenario, the industry will still generate electricity and LGCs from plantation log offcuts and sawmill residues. And the relatively few healthy koalas still living in native forests and their fellow native animals and plants will grunt their thanks. That will require a lot of effective campaigning. Let's aim that future generations of lyrebirds forget how to mimic the sound of chainsaws.

**TAKE ACTION: email your electricity supplier telling them to not buy electricity generated by burning native forest timber.**



## Living Landscapes Under Attack?

How many people realise that NSW is in the midst of a biodiversity crisis? What can be done about it? **Leigh Martin** reports...

There are currently two legal boundaries which protect flora and fauna species, and endangered ecological communities, as well as the native vegetation that provides habitat for threatened species in NSW: the Threatened Species Conservation Act

1995 and the Native Vegetation Act 2003.

Any weakening of these Acts could spell the end for threatened species and habitats in NSW. Yet this is exactly what the State Government's current

review of these acts will achieve if allowed to go ahead.

The figures already reveal a state in the midst of a biodiversity crisis. There are over 1000 plant and animal species and populations threatened

# SYDNEY FRONTIERS

*Green Capital's dynamic new program manager, Andrew Tovey, reports on the rising power of 'local' for sustainability*

The answer to the old puzzle of 'How do you eat an elephant?' is one bite at a time. Creating a new, cleaner economy is a similar challenge.

The 1980s catch-cry of 'think globally, act locally' has become discredited, with the likes of leading environmental thinker David Suzuki recanting. Suzuki argues instead that the immensity of our global challenges overwhelms people, and suppresses action rather than promoting it. Local, municipal-level action is all that counts.

Now we're seeing the rise of a new era of sustainability focused on bite-sized chunks of economic transformation. City economies - like the City of Sydney with its Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan, and the ACT Government's renewable energy push for Canberra - are stepping up as the engine room for real and measureable action. It's a crucial shift given collapsing national commitment and floundering international agreement on meeting the big climate change, resource security and wider environmental challenges of our times.



Green Capital sees a cleaner, brighter and better economy already taking shape. The Sydney Frontiers Forum Event will explore how business, public institutions, local government and the broader community can work together in new ways to collectively shape sustainability at the local level. With confirmed keynote addresses from Roy Green (Dean of the UTS Business School) and Rose Hiscock (new Director of the Powerhouse Museum) and panelists from Sydney Water, Sustainable Business Australia

and the Green Capital team (with more to follow), this event promises to be a timely articulation of collective vision in an exciting new era of change.

**Don't miss our first 'Sydney Frontiers' forum - April 10th, at the UTS Aerial Function Centre, 235 Jones Street, Ultimo (just off Broadway), 5pm - 7.30pm, including post-event drinks and networking.**

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with extinction in NSW and more than 100 Endangered Ecological Communities. 59% of all mammals, 34% of amphibians, 28% of birds, 18% of reptiles and 18% of plants are in danger of extinction.

The single biggest cause of species decline and biodiversity loss in NSW is habitat destruction via land clearing. This has been recognised by the NSW Scientific Committee in their decision to list clearing of native vegetation as a key threatening process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

This is why the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and the Native Vegetation Act 2003 place strict controls on the clearing of native vegetation, and on activities such as

mining and development that may affect threatened species and their habitats.

While these protections have been important in protecting threatened species from further decline and they

**“over 1000 plant and animal species in NSW are threatened with extinction”**

have slowed biodiversity loss, the current biodiversity crisis will not be averted without more strenuous controls.

Specifically, more protection is needed for the habitat requirements of wide ranging and migratory species.

Maintaining large areas of intact native vegetation is also necessary if we are to prevent habitat fragmentation, and to accommodate the range shifts that many species will need to make in response to climate change.

Unfortunately the present review of the Threatened Species Conservation and the Native Vegetation Acts appears to be an attempt to erode current protections under the guise of reducing 'green tape'.

TEC is working closely with other environment groups to protect these vital laws and strengthen biodiversity protection. We are developing a grass roots community engagement strategy to persuade the NSW government that more needs to be done to protect NSW's natural heritage.

# Greening the radio waves

*A weekly radio show about the environment that's not depressing?*

Total Environment Centre now has its own radio program, Green Velvet, on Radio Eastside every Monday night at 6pm. Eastside has always been a station run by musicians, and certainly offers the full array from house and soul, to gypsy and jazz as well as arts news and chat. Now listeners can enjoy the golden-throated call of the rarely heard Turquoise parrot, or the music of waves lapping on a Coral Beach, as well as a regular segment entitled "Endangered Bird Call of the Week".

Presenter Ruth Hessey interweaves these nature sounds, courtesy of TEC's friends at Listening Earth, with snapshots of enviro news, and a weekly guest. So far Ruth has been entertained by James Bradfield Moody, talking about collaborative consumption and his new venture Tushare (<https://www.tushare.com/>); anti-plastics activist Tim Silverwood updating the ongoing campaign for a Container Deposit Scheme for beverage containers ([www.take3.org.au/](http://www.take3.org.au/)); Laura Wells the model and environment scientist who recently walked through the Tarkine in Tasmania with other greenies; Andrew Skeoch from Listening Earth explaining that nature recording is as much about habitat and landscape as it is about sounds

([www.listeningearth.com.au/](http://www.listeningearth.com.au/)); and science writer Bianca Nogrady discussing her book about death, *The End* ([www.biancanogrady.com/author/](http://www.biancanogrady.com/author/)), and the options we now have to arrange "green" burials.

"ApocalOptimism" was covered by Green Capital's Andrew Tovey, who discussed ways to stay optimistic and proactive about the future while facing the many disturbing facts about what is happening to our ecosystems all over the planet ([greencapital.org.au/](http://greencapital.org.au/)).

When he's not too busy, TEC's tireless executive director Jeff

Angel also phones in with an update on the most important environment story of the week.

We can guarantee that while Green Velvet never shies from cold facts and hot stories, it is also the most positive environment show on the airwaves, bringing you the good news, innovations and breakthroughs, from across the green frontier. And if you are out of range for Radio Eastside you can listen via the internet.

**Green Velvet, Radio Eastside, 89.7 FM:**  
[eastsidefm.org/listen-online/](http://eastsidefm.org/listen-online/)

**"ApocalOptimism" is about staying optimistic while facing many disturbing facts"**

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# Fair Trade Gas and Electricity?

*How many people know where their energy really comes from? TEC is preparing a simple tool to help consumers, explains our energy advocate, Mark Byrne*

You can read the pack to find out what's in your food or cosmetics. You know some of what you're getting when you pull up at the petrol bowser. With a bit of digging, you can find out in which companies your super fund is investing your money. But when it comes to where your energy comes from, forget it.

There is only one source of electrons coming down the wire and one source of gas being piped into your home or business, but how many people know that their 'natural' gas already contains about 5 per cent 'fracked' coal seam gas, and will likely contain much more in coming years?

The situation is much murkier still in relation to electricity. Thanks to the bewildering range of deals that

retailers enter into to guarantee supply and avoid overexposure to the volatile spot market, it is impossible to tell whether your retailer is trying to go

**"The regulators tell us that environmental matters are not relevant to the 'long term interest of consumers'"**

close to 100 per cent renewable or is content to be 100 per cent fossil-fuelled. The current grid average is around 87 per cent fossil-fuelled.

In late 2012 TEC commissioned the Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS to collate the publicly available information on the fuel mixes of

retailers' financial arrangements. This information is readily available in some overseas markets, but the ISF report found that there are big gaps in the Australian market. We have approached regulators about changing this, but they tell us that environmental matters are not relevant to the 'long term interest of consumers' as defined by the National Electricity Objective.

When TEC is asked for advice on where people should go to get clean, green energy, it's relatively easy to point to the bad guys, but difficult to say with much certainty who the good guys are. Our default position, following the annual Green Electricity Watch surveys and rankings TEC commissioned from 2002-2007, is to recommend offsetting 'black' or

dirty grid electricity purchases by buying 100 per cent GreenPower products. This ensures that an equivalent amount of new renewable energy will be generated in the following year. (There is a range of new green energy products coming on to the market, but they don't necessarily result in more renewable

energy being fed into the grid: that is, they fail the basic test of 'additionality'.)

Now we are going one step further, by working with a consultant on a simple tool to help consumers choose between electricity retailers on the basis of a few simple criteria: the mix of renewable energy or fossil fuelled

power stations they own; their support for the Renewable Energy Target; whether they are fracking for coal seam gas; and whether they offer 100 per cent GreenPower offsets. The tool will be available around June after road-testing and will be widely distributed.

## TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION

### TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE INC.

Yes, I want to help the environment campaign work of TEC.

Name: .....

Address: .....

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I wish to pay by:

- Cheque payable to Total Environment Centre Inc
- Visa     Mastercard

I wish to donate:

- \$1000     \$500     \$100     Other \$.....
- or Please deduct \$..... monthly from my credit

card until further notice

Card Number:

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Card expires: .....

Name on card:.....

Signature:.....

Phone: (day) .....

(evening) .....

- Please send me regular email updates to

.....

Return this form and payment to:

**The Administrator**  
**Total Environment Centre Inc**  
**Suite 2, 89 Jones Street Ultimo. 2007**

## 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 Inc**  
**Suite 2, 89 Jones Street Ultimo. 2007**

I would like to volunteer to help TEC with:

- Reception/support
- Phone marketing
- Research/submission writing
- Other

My previous work has been .....

My qualifications / skills are.....

.....

My environmental interests are.....

.....

I am available (per week)     half day     one day

occasionally other .....

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....Postcode: .....

Date: .....

Email: .....

Phone: (day).....(evening).....

## Consider a Bequest

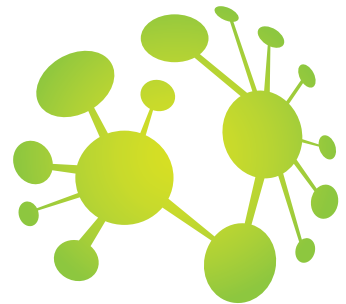
Please remember TEC in your will. The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$..... to TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of Total Environment Centre Inc. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to Total Environment Centre Inc."

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**NEWS**



for the future



HotHouse is a new quick-fire event series about creative solutions for a brighter future.

Our first event on 26 March will throw fresh perspectives on our work SPACES with stories from passionate changemakers – including the masterminds behind the Google and WWF office fitouts – and an interactive workshop by FlashTank (the creators of U.LAB).

Join the party with local wine, craft beer and like-minded folk.

Venue: The Powerhouse Museum

Date Wednesday 26th March (6pm-9:30pm)

Bookings and a line-up for the first event:  
<http://greencapital.org.au/events/hothouse/>