



TOTAL ENVIRONMENT

2008 / ISSUE 3

EDITORIAL

THE E-CRISIS

Environmental crisis and now, the economic crisis. Both caused by the same disease – running up debt we and future generations can't afford. Throw in short termism with the focus on getting bigger and more things faster and we have the perfect ethical storm.

The environmental crisis embodied in global warming and the retreat of the natural world is on a slower time frame and is less prescient in the minds of decision makers. But it did not take governments around the world long to find trillions of dollars to bail out debt and the banks. Most people are resigned to the socialising of losses by once highly profitable companies with CEOs on obscene salaries, but they have a justifiable gut antipathy to the immorality of it. Another ingredient, particularly in the United States is the excessive adherence to the free market or deregulatory philosophy that created gaping holes in the public interest fabric. The system was open to gross abuse.

The similarities to the current debate about emissions trading or the carbon pollution reduction scheme are clear.

We have been warned that if we don't begin to take action and draw down our environmental debt caused by greenhouse pollution - now – then we will have to pay more later. But what do we see? Big companies led by the Business Council of Australia and others want to delay action giving them the maximum amount of time to continue business as usual, that is, continue polluting – and they want to be paid to do it with free permits or just big cash handouts.

Sure there is a transitional issue for the economy we have to navigate; and the companies (who have been warned

previously that action on carbon would have to be taken for several years) want to protect their shareholders. But they are really fighting to keep their market share without adjusting despite the urgent need to act. They want the money with no strings attached – and remember they are not promising to pass on the benefits to consumer (as revealed by TEC in a secret memo we obtained from financial advisers), they are going to keep the cash. Another major ethical failure.

The result is that the environmental costs will be borne by society and future generations, while the profits remain with a few. It's hard not to whip oneself into a lather of indignation.

Environmentalists must avoid this. We need clear heads and a positive attitude. We need to continue to stress the immediacy of the environmental crisis and the gains to be made. There's no economic dividend from the banking crisis (unless you count the greater regulatory wisdom we will hopefully learn), but there is a massive financial return from concerted action on the environment. Environmental services, our natural capital will be conserved; and new green industry will flourish creating thousands of jobs and new businesses. TEC intends working with these sectors – in green energy, recycling, efficiency and environmental restoration – to help bring their future proofing benefits to the community as soon as possible.

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Free CPRS Permits handout threatens viability of recyclers

Sarah Van Erp, Waste Minimisation Officer

Australian recyclers will lose out against energy intensive manufacturers who use virgin materials under the government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).

Companies that are considered emissions intensive trade exposed, which includes paper and packaging industries that use virgin materials, stand to receive a subsidy for 60-90% of their carbon emissions through free permits. This subsidy will severely disadvantage domestic recyclers who won't get the subsidy and, may no longer be viable in Australia – yet they are positive players in climate change policy.

Taking a packaging and paper manufacturer who uses virgin material as an example, their carbon emissions are 14.8% higher than that of a manufacturer who uses recycled materials. Recycling reduces emissions a further 75% by avoiding methane emissions from the landfilled paper waste. Additional co-benefits of recycling include reduced water use and conservation of non-renewable materials. This should make support for recyclers a no-brainer. Sectors that could be affected include: metals, glass, plastics and other recyclers; industries that collectively represent over 1.2% of Australia's GDP.

Recycling can achieve fast cuts to Australia's carbon emissions because the technology is proven, and the lead time to build infrastructure is relatively short. Given the intention of the CPRS to reduce emissions, it would be an ironic outcome for industry that is able to deliver reductions of over 5% of Australia's net emissions by 2020 to be harmed.

TEC will be campaigning for the complementary measures that are needed to ensure the survival of the recycling industry in the short to medium term. These include:

- The phase out of non-stabilised biodegradable waste from landfill (as currently required in Europe)
- An inclining carbon levy on all landfill waste, similar to the NSW or the UK systems, with accumulated funds directed to investment in recycling and alternative waste technology infrastructure.

Litter study highlights need for Container Deposits

Australian governments need to act swiftly to bring in container deposits, as Keep Australia Beautiful's recent litter study has shown that litter continues to be dominated by dumped beverage containers. It was no surprise that South Australia was an outlier to this trend, the key difference being that South Australia has refundable deposits on drink containers.

The study showed that, on average, litter in all other states is comprised of 43% more containers than that in South Australia, with the highest offenders for the amount of containers in their litter being Western Australia at 61.6% followed by Northern Territory at 54.1%.

These results support the urgent need for Australian governments to follow South Australia's lead on introducing Container Deposit Legislation (CDL). And local councils in other states are shouldering the cost for collection and disposal of this waste.

The most littered brand - Coca-Cola - comprised almost 10% of all litter in Australia - an incriminating finding given they are one of the most vociferous opponents of container deposits.

TEC WELCOMES NEW WASTE CAMPAIGNERS

TEC has had a long history of campaigning in the area of waste, in particular resource recovery, extended producer responsibility, reduced packaging and increased recyclability for a range of products from plastic bags, to mobile phones and e-waste. The next two years are likely to be critical to making progress.

We would like to welcome our two new Waste Minimisation Officers; **Sarah Van Erp** and **Helen Kerley** who will help TEC to advance resource recovery and efficiency at both NSW and national levels.



Energy ministers need to be dragged into spotlight

Jane Castle, Resource Conservation Campaigner

Energy ministers have finally dared to peek out from the hidey-hole they've been in for the last decade and recognise the relationship between the National Electricity Market (NEM) and climate change. Readers will know TEC has been campaigning on this for some time.

Ministers have now directed the Australian Energy Market Commission to investigate whether the NEM will be affected by the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target. On past performance, this will provide a platform for opponents of climate change policies to play Chicken Little, demand free permits and slow down Australia's response to the biggest threat the world has ever faced. At best, would be a robust discussion about how the NEM could stop blocking climate change policies and start being part of the solution.

Australia is currently an international laggard by refusing to allow the NEM to acknowledge the environment. Embedded in the National Electricity Law is an explicit exclusion of environmental considerations. This means that inefficiency and greenhouse pollution get the green light while energy efficiency and clean energy face an array of barriers.

It's a truly bizarre disconnection between the goals of energy ministers and the goals of the rest of the nation. It means that whatever policies get put in place to reduce emissions could be watered down or blocked when they hit the real world of how electricity is bought and sold in the NEM. More needs to be done, and quickly, to dig energy ministers out of their hidey-hole and plonk them in the spotlight of the climate change challenge.

Revenue from Emissions Trading: Energy Efficiency versus Vote Buying

How the Federal Government spends the revenue earned from emissions trading is a real test of whether it is serious about stopping climate change or whether it is addicted to populist 're-elect us' policies.

If the billions of dollars of revenue is simply handed back to households and polluters, it will contradict the economic message that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is designed to deliver - inefficient electricity consumption will continue and Australia will remain one of the world's worst per capita polluters. The sensible alternative is to channel revenue into a comprehensive energy efficiency program for all Australian households, starting with the most disadvantaged.

Energy efficiency is the cheapest and quickest way to stop climate change. The recent McKinsey Report showed that energy efficiency would enable Australia to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20% on 1990 levels by 2020 at no net cost to the economy. We are urging Minister Garrett, who is charged with delivering energy efficiency, to limit ineffective cash hand-outs and enable all Australians and the environment take advantage of this win-win approach to climate change.



Protection: not 'Risk Management' more longwall planned

Dave Burgess, Natural Areas Campaigner

TEC has let members of the new Rees' ministry know that proposals for thirty years of further longwall mining on the Woronora Plateau are unacceptable. The industry did not waste any time in rolling out four separate mining proposals in the wake of the Southern Coalfield Inquiry, which was finally released in July 2008.

The Inquiry has been a major disappointment with the recommendations providing the industry the certainty it was demanding through long-term approvals, while offering the upland swamps and river systems of the upper Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment, including 91% of the southern water supply catchment, no firm protection in return.

Instead of protection zones, the Inquiry Panel proposes the creation of flexible Risk Management Zones (RMZs) for mining in sensitive areas and a 'reverse onus of proof' whereby it would be up to proponents to show their mine would not have 'unacceptable' impacts. RMZs would be identified by mining companies themselves and, while the precautionary nature of an onus of proof sounds encouraging, the Inquiry significantly underplays the damage that has occurred already. At one stage it appears to urge the NSW Government to do a better job in preparing the public to expect more damage to rivers.

An application for thirty years of mining at the Appin and West Cliff collieries under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979) has been lodged by BHP Billiton. Peabody Energy has also applied for 20 years of mining under the Waratah Rivulet and Woronora Dam. Maps of Gujarat NRE's plans show some of the most intensive longwall mining ever seen, as well as the possibility of "multi-seam" mining. BHP Billiton's Dendrobium Colliery also intends to move into an area around Wongawilli Creek and under numerous upland swamps.

Alarming, the Port Kembla Coal Terminal has put in an application (also part 3A) to double its capacity solely

through increased truck movements from mines in the Southern Coalfield. This sends a clear signal that the industry expects to get its way.

Meanwhile, communities on the Liverpool Plains have taken a strong stand against mining with BHP Billiton exploration rigs being physically prevented from accessing farms inside the Caroonia exploration area for a number of weeks. The company appeared to make a concession when it announced it would not mine for coal under the floodplains and only continue to look for coal under the ridges. However, the importance of the ridges as recharge areas means mining would still have major impacts and BHP Billiton always intended to narrow the search anyway. A study of potential impacts on aquifers is being demanded.

Adjacent to the Caroonia area, China Shenhua has reportedly paid the NSW Government over \$300 million dollars for the rights to explore an area known as Watermark. A further \$200 million will be paid into NSW coffers if a new mining lease is granted.

In other news Felix Resources has applied to move its longwalls close to the Goulburn River and the Drip Gorge in the Western Coalfield, while another inquiry into proposed longwall mining in the Central Coast water catchments is expected to be concluded soon. TEC will be visiting all of these areas in November and is urging the Government to act now on protection measures.

V8 Supercar lunacy threatens Olympic Park

Alison Karwaj, Communications Officer

A proposal by V8 Supercars Australia to hold street races at Sydney Olympic Park from next year has the state labor government turning its back on the community, local councils and environmentalists – another blow to its environmental credentials.

Sydney Olympic Park holds the legacy of the “clean, green Olympic Games” and the Park has been transformed from a badly degraded site into a world-recognised environmental showpiece that is committed to practicing ecologically sustainable development at residential and commercial levels. But this is now at risk with the Rees government pledging support for a V8 supercar street race.

Development and operation of the race circuit will require the removal of up to 700 native trees and result in massive quantities of greenhouse gas and hazardous air pollutants being released into the atmosphere. Local noise and traffic pollution will be increased hugely with 7km of concrete barriers being set up by 470 semi-trailer movements, while millions of dollars of investment in the “green”, “sustainable” Olympic Park will be potentially lost.

The local councils of Ryde, Parramatta and Auburn, voted unanimously against the proposal; as did the Sydney Olympic Park Authority Board, along with numerous resident groups

from the local community. TEC has been taking a leading role in the campaign.

With the Eastern Creek motor racing circuit just down the road and in need of funds, there is no justification for this project which besides destroying years of progress on sustainability, will cost NSW taxpayers over \$90 million - money which could be spent better elsewhere in light of the state's financial situation.

V8 supercars Australia donated \$15,000 to the NSW ALP and then-premier Morris Iemma gave in-principle support to the street race. However, with a change of state government leadership, this proposal provided the Rees government with a perfect opportunity to show its environmental, community and economic credentials by placing public interest ahead of private profits of political donors. But they failed in this credibility test.

TEC has welcomed the state opposition's calls for V8 Supercar racing to remain at Eastern Creek and is calling for them to explore all possible parliamentary avenues to block the event. TEC has also placed adverts in local papers opposing the race and we are committed to a grass roots, activist campaign with local councils and residents for as long as is necessary to defeat this proposal. For more information on the campaign, go to www.tec.org.au

MORE V8 MADNESS – NOW IT'S \$90M IN TAXPAYER'S MONEY, 700 TREES AND 470 TRUCKS!

The Iemma government will soon make a decision on putting polluting, noisy, gas guzzling V8 supercar races at Olympic Park:

- vital open space at risk
- 700 trees to be cut down
- waste of public money
- a magnet for more polluting events
- green leadership precinct wrecked
- weeks of trucks and community disruption

Authorised by Jeff Angel, Total Environment Centre, Sydney

Join the campaign:

- visit www.tec.org.au to adopt a tree; more information and how to help the campaign
- write to Premier Iemma, Parliament House, Sydney 2000



Total Environment Centre Inc



The future of sustainable government procurement

Leigh Martin, Urban Campaigner

Government procurement policies and practices have a vital role to play in promoting sustainability. Total non-defence procurement across all levels of government (Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local) in Australia has been estimated to be in excess of \$50 billion. The purchasing power of governments has the potential to act as a major driving force, particularly with governments being major purchasers of goods and services with substantial environmental impacts such as motor vehicles and IT equipment.

TEC has undertaken a review of current procurement policies of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. The results of our review were presented at the 2008 Sustainable

Procurement Conference in Brisbane. Several clear themes have emerged.

While current procurement policies seek to include review of sustainability and other non-price factors in the assessment of value for money there is little clear guidance on how sustainability is to be assessed. In the absence of clear criteria to assess competing products and services it is unlikely that decisions to favour more expensive products with superior environmental credentials could be easily justified. Thus price will remain dominant over sustainability considerations.

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Current value for money calculations also fail to consider the long term benefits and foregone costs (such as future environmental repair) associated with choosing more sustainable products and services. This shortcoming should be addressed through the use of triple bottom line assessment.

Monitoring and reporting of sustainable procurement performance is a key factor; however, requirements in this regard are scant. Procurement policies should be amended to require agencies to report on the sustainability of their procurement activities.

A major factor in determining the sustainability of procurement for government agencies is the level of training

and expertise in sustainability for staff with responsibility for procurement. Procurement policies should require all staff with procurement authority to be given detailed training.

Exemption of non-budget agencies from sustainable procurement requirements in many jurisdictions weakens the contribution of governments and reduces the potential market for sustainable goods and services. Non-budget agencies should be subject to the same requirements as budget sector agencies in relation to sustainable procurement.

TEC will be campaigning for major improvements in the procurement policies and practices of Australian governments.

Garnaut: Failure to address global warming will haunt humanity...

Cameron Eren, Industry Partnerships

With the release of his Final Report, Professor Ross Garnaut has issued a challenge to governments throughout the world: rise to the challenge of climate change or succumb to a defeat that 'would haunt humanity until the end of time.'

The review confirmed the need for atmospheric concentrations of CO₂e to stabilise at 400ppm and showed that a policy of strong emissions reductions was the most attractive option for both Australian society and the Australian economy.

Despite going to great lengths to highlight the high costs of failure, and painstakingly demonstrating that the Australian economy would actually benefit from strong emissions reductions, the Final Report had a sting in its tail, expressing doubt that the governments of the world would rise to the challenge.

The problem as Garnaut sees it is what he calls 'the awful arithmetic of developing country emissions.' That is, the developed nations might all agree to an international climate pact but he is doubtful that the developing nations will follow suit.

His response is to advocate a series of defensive fallback positions. If the world agrees to stabilise atmospheric emissions at 450ppm then Australia should commit to reduce emissions by 25% on 2000 levels by 2050. If the world agrees to 550ppm then we'd commit to 10% cuts. If the world fails to agree on anything we should only take on 5% cuts.

In what is an almost flawless report this is the point at which Garnaut's logic falters. In attempting to respond to what he perceives as the international deadlock on climate talks he advocates that which would cement the deadlock. It was agreed in Bali that the starting point for negotiations was emissions reductions of 25-40% on 1990 levels by 2020. Were

Australia to place a meaningless 5-25% (on 2000 levels) target on the table it would be seized upon as disingenuous and self serving - a pattern of behaviour that has haunted the global talks.

In the lead up to the Bali Summit the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change revealed that to even stabilise at 445ppm industrialised nations as a group would have to reduce emissions by at least 40% on 1990 levels by 2020. Even this target would only give the world a 50% chance of avoiding dangerous climate change.

It is only the leadership of individual nations that will break the international deadlock. An 'averages' approach will lead to a race to the bottom that will only compound the deadlock. Nations need to demonstrate leadership and unilaterally commit to a science based 2020 emissions reduction target. For Australia, this means reducing emissions by at least 40% on 1990 levels by 2020.

Despite his pessimism and questionable logic, Garnaut points out that there's 'just a chance' that we will rise to the occasion and reminded the world that 'there are moments in the history of humanity when fateful choices are made' and that "the decision over the next few years on whether to take strong action to mitigate human-induced climate change is one such moment."

The Australian government will announce its 2020 emissions reduction target in 8 weeks time. Only then will we know whether the Australian government heard his plea.

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,
PO Box A176, Sydney South NSW 1235

I would like to volunteer to help TEC with:

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- Phone marketing
- Research / submission writing
- Other

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My qualifications / skills are

My environmental interests are

I am available (per week) half day one day
 occasionally
other

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"I bequeath the sum of \$..... to TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE Inc. for its general purposes and
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complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to Total Environment Centre Inc. "

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