

TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

Four decades of Environmental Campaigning

Since 1972 Total Environment Centre has campaigned on the total range of environment issues - natural and urban, coastal and inland, country and city, toxics and health. Highlights follow.

1972

- 20 March: **Total Environment Centre (TEC)**, Australia's first full-time environment advocacy centre, is officially launched.
- *A leading edge for the environment movement. We expect to strike some sparks.*
- TEC's *Blue Mountains Threats* maps reveal proposed developments: powerlines, pine planting, mines, logging and urban development. Campaigns follow over several years to protect wilderness areas in the **Blue Mountains: Southern Blue Mountains, Wollemi, Mt Werong, Nattai, Gardens of Stone**. All are eventually declared national parks.

1973

- TEC's Forest Conservation Committee produces one of the earliest studies on the fate of native forests, *Conservation and Management of Native Forests*. The campaign to protect the **Border Ranges Rainforest** starts in earnest. This lays the groundwork for the later publication (in 1978) of *Forest Ecosystems - Their Future in NSW*, a document that becomes the basis for many future park proposals.

1974

- Sydney's polluted **Cooks River** and its foreshore parks are routed for oil pipelines and a massive expressway. TEC and local groups oppose further development. In 1976 TEC produces *Cooks River - Environment Survey and Landscape Design*, which lays the foundations for improvements still being undertaken today. In 1996, TEC audits 20 years of river work and finds water quality improved but foreshore regeneration still needed.

1975

- **Botany Bay** becomes the battleground, with TEC and local groups fighting major industrial developments. The **Botany Bay Coordination Committee** is established and public meetings give voice to community concern. This leads to publication in 1977 of *City in Peril*, exposing the wide metropolitan impacts of new oil and container terminals, runways, sand mining and roads. A government inquiry leads to abandonment of the coal loader scheme. **Towra Point** becomes a nature reserve, but Botany Bay's environment remains under significant stress.

1976

- TEC submits the first environmental impact statement ever produced under the State Pollution Control Commission regime, against sand mining at **Myall Lakes**. In 1977 the long-running campaign against coastal sand mining achieves success when the Wran Government stops **mining in national parks**. New coastal parks are declared.
- TEC organises opposition to **woodchipping on the north coast**. The Minister for Environment asks TEC for a map of conservation claims for the south coast.
- We begin work, with local people, to protect **Lord Howe Island**. Eventually a world heritage reserve is created.

1977

- A TEC study of the **Macquarie Marshes** reveals extensive environmental threats. In 1979 a plan to drain the southern marshes is suspended after a public outcry. TEC produces the first hydrological study of the Marshes in 1981 showing major changes to the water regime and the need for a water plan that provides environmental flows. This is finally achieved in 1996.

1978

- TEC's **Endangered Species Committee** begins work on the first Australian listing of threatened species and their habitats. More than 270 species are identified. In 1983 we publish *Our Wildlife in Peril*. In 1988 the government announces an Endangered Species Habitat Act, but fails to pass it. Our campaign finally achieves success in 1995 with the passage of the ***Threatened Species Conservation Act***.

1979

- TEC launches the **Clean Air for Children Campaign** with inner city groups and medical professionals, aiming to eliminate lead from petrol. New national emission control laws are adopted nationwide to eliminate lead and reduce other emissions in new cars.
- A campaign to protect **Sydney Harbour** foreshores begins as the Government seeks to dispose of "surplus lands". In 1984 the government promises to stop the sale.
- The **Terania Creek** forest protest starts a statewide effort to protect all remaining rainforest. TEC becomes the nerve centre for the campaign and establishes the **Rainforest Action Centre**. In 1982 the Wran Government creates more than 200,000 ha of new parks, protecting the largest areas of rainforest left in the State. These are later listed as World Heritage.

1980

- We complete the first inventory of coastal estuaries and lagoons in NSW. In 1982 we issue planning guidelines for protecting coastal wetlands and form the **Wetlands Coalition**. TEC maintains a register of threatened wetlands. 1985 sees gazettal of a State Environmental Planning Policy protecting over 1,000 areas.

1981

- Concerns arise about **alienation of urban parks** for exclusive use. A TEC survey reveals leasing disputes and the need to improve legislative protection and council practices. In 1986 a State Policy is introduced that requires greater assessment of proposals which affect urban bushland. The Local Government Act 1993 attempts to prevent park alienation but leaves loopholes. TEC's **Community Land Campaign** to remove these achieves success in 1997 when the Government says it will change the Act.

1982

- We obtain government support for protection of **wild and scenic rivers**. By 1997 legislation has still not been passed so TEC prepares its own legislation and submits it to parliamentarians.
- TEC proposals to protect **solar access** and encourage solar energy are released.

1983

- TEC's Toxic Chemicals Committee organises the first national conference on the **toxic chemical load on the environment and human health**. Later conferences on **Solvents**; and **Chemicals in Schools** in the 1990s break new ground. In 1995 a 10-year campaign results in a ban on **organochlorines** for

termite control in Australia. Over the years TEC establishes the largest independent toxic chemical advice service in Australia.

- A bill to **reform forestry management** is produced by TEC. The Government brings in some changes. In 1992 we work with MPs to draft a new Act.

1984

- TEC organises the first **national training course for environmentalists**. A second is held in 1990.
- TEC establishes and supports the **Independent Committee of Inquiry into Nuclear Weapons and Other Consequences of Uranium Mining in Australia**.
- An **anti-urban freeway campaign** is launched at TEC, calling for an inquiry into the transport planning process, an alternative transport plan and removal of the Department of Main Roads as arbiter of its own environmental impact statements. The government removes some motorway corridors.

1985

- A 10-year campaign to protect the **South-East Forests** begins. TEC produces new park plans for Tantawangalo, Coolangubra and Cathcart, all threatened by woodchipping. The **South-East Forest Alliance** is formed, with TEC as campaign centre. In 1996 the Carr Government declares national parks totalling more than 90,000 ha.
- TEC is a founding member of the **NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES)**.
- We release a plan to protect the **Upper Hacking River**, catchment for Australia's first national park.

1986

- TEC calls together more than 50 groups to launch a campaign to protect **Sydney's urban environment**, making this an election issue.
- Our *A-Z of Chemicals in the Home* is published - now in its third edition.

1987

- In association with local groups TEC releases a plan for **Bonville National Park**, a coastal area threatened by a housing proposal for over 10,000 people. The land is bought by government and the park completed in 1996.
- **Billinudgel** (near Byron Bay) is threatened by a canal estate for 40,000 people. In 1997 it is made a nature reserve.

1988

- TEC helps form the **Forest Summit**, a team of forest action groups. The old growth forest campaign grows with blockades, court cases and political action.
- Development plans for **Jervis Bay** trigger a community campaign. TEC and other groups work to defeat plans for new Navy installations, a quarry, sewerage and urban development. The **Jervis Bay Park and Marine Reserve** is expanded seven years later. 1989
- New pollution laws are introduced and TEC lobbies MPs with other groups to ensure pollution is prosecuted. In 1990 we call for the **Environment Protection Authority** to become a real green defender and a new green charter for the EPA is introduced.

1990

- TEC studies of **rural and urban tree preservation laws** show major flaws. We press government to upgrade bushland protection.
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1991

- The Greiner Government introduces a raft of legislation to wind back hard-won environment gains. A major collaboration of all environment groups stops this attack on the NSW environment.

1992

- Minority government presents new opportunities for pioneering laws. TEC conceives the **Endangered Fauna (Interim Protection) Act**, dramatically changing efforts to protect species. The Bill becomes law after a torrid public and parliamentary campaign.
- TEC begins the **Western Sydney Air Pollution Campaign**. We tap into daily smog data and reveal that air pollution is getting worse, not better, as the Government claims. In 1995, the Government announces a Smog Action Plan.

1993

- Environment groups work with the **Sydney Olympics** bid group to upgrade Olympic environmental guidelines. In 1996 TEC becomes a founding member (and chair) of **Green Games Watch 2000**, the community watchdog that will audit Sydney's green games.
- TEC releases claims for new **urban bushland parks**, and many are protected by the Carr Government in 1996/97.

1994

- TEC hosts the LINKUP project, which aims to produce an **alternative transport plan for Sydney**. Dozens of community groups contribute.
- We work with fishing and green groups on **new fishing laws** that use ecologically sustainable development principles and improve habitat protection measures.

1995

- TEC leads environment efforts during the **NSW State Election**. We work with minor party and independent candidates and release our own environment policies demanding action by the main parties. Strong commitments are obtained on **air pollution, coastal protection, old growth forests and pesticides**. The environment proves to be a key factor in the election outcome and the Carr Government comes to power.
- We play a key role in negotiations with Government, Opposition and cross-benches to produce reforms to **Sydney Water** and **energy utilities**. **Ecologically sustainable development** is a core principle and new laws to reduce sewage pollution and greenhouse gases are introduced.
- TEC continues to play a major role in the campaign to protect **old growth and wilderness forests**, making forest protection a key election issue in 1995, and in the **Forest Parks Countdown Campaign**. Ten new parks are declared over old growth and wilderness forests and more than 800,000 ha set aside for further study in 1996.

1996

- TEC helps farmers and conservationists to campaign for environmental flows for the **Snowy River**, which receives only one per cent of its pre-hydro scheme flow.
- We work with government to develop a **new pollution reduction program**, called load-based licensing (the more you pollute, the more you pay).
- Our inventory of **Sydney Harbour** shows gross sewerage and toxic chemical pollution. The Government announces a \$400 million clean-up program.
- TEC exposes extensive contamination outside Sydney's oldest toxic waste dump at Castlereagh.

1997

- TEC organises key urban groups to back the **Save Sydney Campaign**. Sydney is at the cross-roads with air and water pollution increasing, a second airport proposed, new motorways, and parkland threatened.
- We join with local people in **Gunnedah** to fight for better controls on aerial spraying of agricultural chemicals.

1998

- TEC and other green groups obtain enactment of the **Native Vegetation Conservation Act**, which aims to control land clearing.
- We undertake a major new study into **public transport corridors** for Sydney to help overcome the city's addiction to car travel.
- TEC's campaign to oppose the opening up of national parks and conservation areas to **high impact access groups and tourism development**, succeeds.
- Our new website, **Toxic Chemicals in Your Environment** is launched.
- We release **Greenprint for Sydney, an environmental strategy for the 21st century**.

1999

- TEC reveals industry plans to **burn native forest for electricity** and the environment movement launches a campaign to stop the scheme.
- TEC and local groups save **Lake Wollumboola** and its coastal lands from massive development.
- After many years of lobbying by TEC, a strong **Pesticides Act** with new prosecution powers and control provisions, is passed.
- The **Sydney Harbour oil spill** causes significant pollution and TEC calls for improved protection and removal of oil terminals.
- We release **Clearing the Air, Pesticide Spray Drift Kit** to help communities to combat chemical trespass.
- TEC coordinates environment efforts during the **State Election**, with over 20 key environmental policies adopted by the new government.

2000

- The campaign to save the **Snowy River** wins with a 3 government program and funding of over \$200 million to raise environmental flows from 1% to 28%.
- Environmentally sustainable urban development gets a boost with the Government agreeing with TEC's suggestion to establish the **Sustainability Advisory Council**. We hold the **Sustainable Sydney** conference.
- TEC publishes **The Toxic Playground, a guide to reducing the chemical load in schools and child care centres**.
- **324,000ha of old growth, wilderness and coastal forest** in the south of the state are made national park.
- As concern about urban waste grows TEC releases an **Integrated ESD Waste Management Plan** to divert waste from landfill to recycling and reuse.

2001

- Our investigation of the government's alleged public consultation on thousands of **pollution control licences**, reveals the public don't know about it!
- TEC's **Save the Coast** campaign involves over 100 local groups. The government agrees to a new coastal protection law to stop damaging development and implements a coastal conservation assessment.

- We draft **Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Environmental Benchmarks, guidelines, achievements, and lessons for environmentally sustainable building and events** which is endorsed by government agencies, Green Games Watch and Greenpeace.
- Consultants for TEC report on **Environmental Sustainability Assessment for Corporations**. We hold a national conference and work with peak green groups.
- TEC releases its **Review of Action for Air**, and gives 4 out of 10 to the government's performance on its 25 year air pollution strategy.
- Lobbying by TEC ensures new waste laws include regulatory powers to require **extended producer responsibility** and new waste reduction plan.
- TEC initiates a joint groups' national survey of **green power schemes**.
- Mining and water don't mix. TEC and Colong Foundation campaign to prevent **destruction of rivers** from subsidence caused by coal mining. Regulation by the pro-mining government agency is overturned and new restrictions introduced.

2002

- The electricity industry again fails to meet voluntary **greenhouse reduction benchmarks**. The government finally responds and our campaign to make the benchmarks compulsory with penalties and for labelling of consumer bills to show greenhouse pollution levels, is successful.
- TEC and other groups release **Paths to a Green Economy** state budget proposals for the NSW Government.
- Our two year campaign to stop the plan to **burn native forests for electricity** is successful.
- TEC launches **GREEN CAPITAL** to review corporate sustainability; engage in debate with the corporate sector and enhance NGO capacity.
- We lead the national effort to stop **the use of toxic waste as fertiliser** on our croplands.
- TEC releases **Safer Solutions: integrated pest management for schools**
- Our legislative work includes amendments to new **Waste, National Parks, Catchment and Threatened Aquatic Species laws**.
- TEC brings over 30 local, state, national and international groups together to campaign against the **Game Bill** which gives hunters regulatory power over licensing of their industry and access to public lands in preference to the community.

2003

- We play the major role in ending **land clearing** in NSW, involving extensive nine month negotiations with the government and farmers on - election policies, a high level reform group and legislation. Millions of hectares of bush will be saved.
- Our **coastal campaign** continues - including an extensive consultation with 130 community groups, resulting in publication of 'Concreting the Coast', showing the scale of development assault and solutions. We also issue a coastal law handbook.
- The campaign to stop the polluting **Redbank 2 coal power station** succeeds. It is rejected on greenhouse impact grounds.
- TEC issues a **5 Point Energy Plan** focussing on renewables and demand management. It shows no new coal plants are necessary.
- A FOI on the EPA by TEC, reveals hundreds of thousands of tonnes of **toxic waste** is dumped each year. We call for a major cleaner production effort.
- Our Green Capital Program expands to other states. A key focus is **corporate carbon liability**.
- TEC undertakes a national **extended producer responsibility** campaign - putting the onus on the producer to take back redundant products.
- We work with local groups to produce **community transport plans**, calling for new public transport services and corridors.

2004

- Our **national climate change** campaign targets the electricity industry, with a push for Demand Management Funds; reform of the National Electricity Market; and principles for emissions trading whereby carbon is given a financial cost in the economy for the first time.
- Gazettal of the '**BASIX**' law which requires all new housing to be constructed to consume 40% less energy and water.
- Release of '**Sydney's Water - going to waste**' a far reaching plan to conserve and recycle our water.
- Our **extended producer responsibility** campaign gains momentum with agreement for a national regulation to manage TVs; rejection of the new draft of the National Packaging Covenant (an industry self regulation instrument) by all state and national environment ministers; and inclusion of the NSW State Waste Strategy targets in joint council waste management agreements.
- Second review of NSW Government's **Action for Air**, - score is 4.5 out of 10.
- **Green Capital** holds forums including 'The Market and Sustainability', 'The Community Right to Know' and emissions trading.

2005

- The **National Packaging Covenant** is reformed with specific targets for reductions in waste. Ministers agree if there is no substantial progress by 2008 then new regulations will be brought in.
- The **Brigalow** woodlands are saved with gazettal of 352,000ha of conservation reserves.
- **Land clearing** finally comes under the control of the Native Vegetation Act which aims to end broadscale clearing.
- **Metro Strategy** released containing sustainability targets and plans to restrict urban sprawl.
- **Green Capital** exposes greenwash and holds major events on sustainable cities and finance.
- A new fund to **buy water** for our stressed rivers is established.
- Our new **energy plan** shows renewables, conservation and gas mean we can avoid new coal power stations. Energy and water demand management funds are created.

2006

- TEC works with over 160 coastal groups and the government begins to release **coastal planning protection** strategies modernizing old pro-development local plans.
- Our national review of **GreenPower** schemes is underway.
- We issue **ReByte! a model electronic waste recycling scheme** for Australia to help push government and industry into action.
- In conjunction with the Environmental Defenders Office we hold regional community workshops on the new **land clearing laws**.
- **Green Capital** focuses on 'short termism' and the sustainable supply chain.

2007

- **More coastal planning strategies** are released and TEC works with local groups on detailed analysis and submissions.
- We release FOI documents showing a litany of regulatory failings to **protect rivers from longwall mining**.
- TEC launches a review of the **carbon offset** industry – it's not a pretty picture.
- '**Power to the People**' is released by TEC – calling for major reform of the National Electricity Market; and we commission a major report on the role of smart meters.
- Industry practices with the free supermarket **plastic shopping bag** and the voluntary **mobile phone recycling plan** are examined by our 'undercover shopper surveys'.
- We release a review of **urban state water regulations** and how they help the environment; and the NSW government agrees with TEC we should have **permanent water saving rules**.
- **Going Carbon Neutral** is Green Capital's most successful event yet.

2008

- The **emissions trading** debate takes off and TEC produces key briefing notes and develops a web guide for the community.
- **Carbon Offset Watch** is released, the first independent ranking in Australia and the third **Green Electricity Watch** survey is completed.
- The NSW government adopts TEC's plan for **energy efficiency targets** to be delivered by the power retailers, the first such scheme in Australia.
- Our pioneering program with major property trusts delivers major energy and greenhouse gas savings for over 80 **investment grade office buildings**.
- **Longwall coal mining** damage to rivers continues to attract controversy and a major inquiry reports on new protection measures.
- Our regular review of '**Action for Air**' finds a few improvements but Sydney is still failing to reach its targets for reduced car travel.
- We help over 100 community groups to oppose controversial changes to **planning and development** legislation.
- The waste campaign expands to encompass **container deposits, e-waste, gas bottle, and battery take back laws; and reducing methane emissions** from landfill.
- We put the spotlight on **greenwash** with our Green Capital program holding a major event and releasing a critique and the Green Cred Checklist.

2009

- Success on e-waste with federal and state environment ministers agreeing to a **national electronic waste recycling scheme** backed by legislation.
- TEC releases a major review of the barriers to **energy efficiency and climate change** policies found in the National Electricity Market.
- We campaign for recognition of **voluntary carbon action** in national emissions trading schemes and succeed (although the ETS fails to pass parliament).
- The campaign for **container deposits** gains momentum focusing on environmental, economic and recycling infrastructure benefits.
- The advertising industry adopts an **Environmental Code** utilising much of our position.
- We begin the '**Green Economy**' campaign with reviews of government procurement and green taxes and Green Capital events.

2010

- The push for national **energy efficiency** measures gains momentum with our Energy Efficiency Communique signed by over 40 businesses.
- After years of lobbying, our joint work on the National Recycling Initiative with industry and local government, and intense negotiations with the federal environment minister - the Commonwealth government enters recycling policy for the first time in two decades with the release of the **National Waste Policy**.
- Further work on the **Green Economy** with release of, 'The Emerging Green Economy' report and a 10-point agenda for the federal election.
- We release confidential company documents revealing plans to **drill for gas** in the city's pristine water catchments.
- TEC and EDO complete a report on '**reconnecting the community with the planning system**'. The Dept of Planning agrees to an Action Plan to remedy key problems.
- Environment ministers decide to commission a regulatory impact statement into new packaging policy including **container deposits**, setting out on a path to final result.

- The Prime Minister's Taskforce on **Energy Efficiency** supports our key goals and agrees the National Electricity Market is a major barrier.
- We complete the '**Lessons from Leaders**' project showcasing energy and greenhouse improvements in high grade office buildings.
- Our final lobbying on a national **Product Stewardship Act** (PSA) is successful and parliament adopts several of our amendments. The Act can cover multiple products.
- Soon after, we win the 7 year **E-Waste** battle with a new PSA regulation requiring 80% collection of old computers and TVs and a 90% material recovery target, ensuring our landfills don't receive the toxic waste.
- We make '**Waste Not**', a 24 min film, which collects industry awards and is recognised as showing there's hope for environmental solutions.
- TEC launches '**Buying Better**' – finding answers to the proliferation of confusing product labels with environmental claims.
- Our Green Capital program hosts the Prime Minister a few days after the **carbon price package** is successfully negotiated.
- Our long running campaign about river destruction caused by **longwall mining** finally achieves a major success with the withdrawal of BHPB from mining under the bushland paradise of Dharawal. It will be made a national park instead.
- The multiple pollution incidents at the Orica chemical plant provide the lynchpin for us to expose the systemic failures in the state's **pollution control system**. The government quickly introduces stronger legislation.
- With coal and coal seam gas rapidly expanding, TEC draws on its long history with the mining industry - disproving the claim that important environments and mining can coexist, in **NSW: Fossil or Balanced Future?**