

State of the Environment



State of the Environment – Summary 2006

Council continues to actively encourage the protection and enhancement of the environment. To achieve this aim, Council has made substantial progress in the preparation and implementation of:

- A community focused Environmental Management Plan (EMP)
- The State of the Environment Report

The EMP directs Council efforts to high priority issues and drives environmental improvement and protection programs. This approach delivers social, cultural, economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits.

A proposed Environmental Management System will establish the best and most appropriate environmental practice management for Council's own operations and services.

The State of the Environment Report provides residents with data and information on Council's environmental performance and identifies issues to be addressed in future. Environmental initiatives already in progress include:

Biodiversity and habitat protection

- fauna and flora surveys at Rapid Creek and East Point, including Lake Alexander
- Lake Alexander water quality investigation program
- Telemetric Irrigation System improvements that provide the capacity to better manage our water resources
- Anula School Frill Neck Lizard habitat restoration and biodiversity protection program
- Northern Quoll surveys and protection program at East Point

Environmental education

- provision of environmental awareness and education programs at Darwin schools
- environmental awareness and training workshops and seminars for Council staff and contractors
- Cane toad awareness program in partnership with Frogwatch
- recycling education and awareness program for schools, Indigenous communities and residents

Pollution mitigation

- campaigns to reduce littering in public places and parks, including the:
 - Butt Free City Program aimed at reducing cigarette butt littering
 - Don't Waste Darwin Program aimed at increasing recycling and reducing rubbish and litter in parks and on foreshores
- public place recycling trials at Mindil Beach, Nightcliff and from December 2006, in The Mall
- installation of modern Waste Bin infrastructure at Nightcliff foreshore and later this year in the CBD, The Mall and Regional Playgrounds
- Cities for Climate Protection Program – reducing Council's greenhouse gas emissions and development of an Energy Reduction Plan for the city. Council has achieved Milestone 2 of this 5 Milestone program

Environmental reporting

- National Pollution Inventory (NPI) reporting on air, water and land emissions at Shoal Bay landfill
- NPI and Australian Bureau of Statistics reporting on recycling and waste management in Darwin
- reporting to the community through fact sheets, displays and events
- State of Environment Reporting

Community and stakeholder collaboration

Council has continued its community and stakeholder collaboration and consultation programs including:

- continued involvement in the Darwin Harbour Regional Plan of Management through the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee (DHAC) and Environmental Management Group (EMG)
- development of environmental partnership programs with industry and stakeholders, including the Australian Food and Grocery Council, Bagot Community, Clean Up Australia Day Council, Greening Australia, Frog Watch, Cool Communities, Charles Darwin University and other councils, government departments and Stakeholder organisations in the region.

- development and implementation of various scientific environmental studies based on Council scholarships arrangements with Charles Darwin University
- completion of community consultation phase of Darwin's EMP
- implementation of air quality monitoring program with Charles Darwin University, the Departments of Health and Community Services and Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA)
- development of a ground water monitoring program for Darwin in partnership with NT Government

Environmental rehabilitation and public health

- foreshore restoration program for Nightcliff
- catchment based vegetation and weed management activities through Council parks and reserves in partnership with NRETA, Greening Australia and Parks and Wildlife
- removal of coffee bush and replanting of rainforest plant species at Vestey's Beach. Environmental initiatives have focused on actively protecting and enhancing the environment and include:
 - implementation of national water initiatives project: the installation of water saving toilets at the Civic Centre
 - ongoing Mosquito control program
 - various applications for external funding to assist with research projects and provision of infrastructure aimed at achieving improved environmental outcomes.

The detailed State of the Environment Report is available from Council and includes performance data on the following key focus areas:

Road to sustainability

Presenting a summary of environmental performance reporting and key sustainability aspects and information including planning, social, cultural and economic issues.

Waste management

Reporting waste reduction measures implemented including greenwaste processed to mulch/compost and recycling, re-use or reprocessing of waste, including tyres.

Community awareness

Reporting on environmental awareness initiatives, partnership programs and events.

Waterways

Reporting on water quality at public pools, Lake Alexander, monitored foreshores, Rapid Creek and the stormwater drainage system generally.

Land management

Reporting on erosion, habitat health, weeds and litter.

Atmosphere

Reporting on greenhouse emission mitigation measures at Shoal Bay landfill, urban air quality in Darwin as available from the National Pollution Inventory and on energy conservation measures implemented by Council as part of the Cities for Climate Protection Program (CCP).

Condition and Trends

Development and growth

Darwin City continued to experience substantial development and growth during 2005/06. Supporting expansion of residential development, tourism, industry and commerce without undue impact on our quality of life and the natural and built environment has been and will continue to be a key challenge.

Environmental planning

Environmental issues are increasingly considered during Council's assessment of development applications, including:

- Appropriate management of storm water requires due consideration for quality as well as quantity issues to protect our wetlands, waterways, Darwin Harbour. Water quality also has a significant impact on the maintenance requirements and life span of Council's stormwater infrastructure.
- Effective and efficient waste management is essential to maintain public and environmental health, particularly in an increasingly high density living environment.

Introduction of policies, guidelines and strategies, including Council's Environmental Protection Framework – Managing the Environment Today for a Healthy Tomorrow, foster environmental protection and respond to a general growth of concern from interested parties about environmental matters, including sustainable development.

Society and culture

The development of Council's Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for Darwin aims to integrate environmental, social, cultural and economic issues into action plans which reflect the wishes and expectations of the Darwin community. Council's Environmental Atlas for Darwin provides the environmental, social, cultural and economic information necessary for informed action planning and community participation.

Management milestones 2005/06

Major environmental management milestones during the reporting period included:

- the construction of the new regional recycling facility
- the completion of the community consultation phase of Councils EMP
- the completion of risk analyse and assessment of Darwin's environmental values
- introduction of public places recycling trials.
- Stage 3 expansion of the Territory's first methane gas power plant at Shoal Bay Landfill
- the Darwin Environmental Management Plan received the *Highly Commended* National Local Government Award 2005 for the section "Integrated Biodiversity Conservation into Planning and Management"

Future action, challenges & priorities

Environmental management challenges will increase in line with growth and development in Darwin. The next 12 months will see the completion and implementation of the Environmental Management Plan, Environmental Atlas for Darwin and action plans for key focus and issues areas.

Sustainable waste management

Securing the long-term future of cost-effective, efficient and environmental sound waste disposal and collection in Darwin. Increasing recycling rates, reducing littering and improving public places waste services.

Consulting with the community

The prioritisation of Council's future environmental management action and works programs will be developed with information gathered from the EMP community consultation program, which will continue into the future.

Caring for waterways

Initiating, participating, facilitating and encouraging research and improvement projects that maintain or improve water quality and preserve fresh water resources.

Protecting land and biodiversity

Initiating, participating, facilitating and encouraging projects that address the key issues of habitat and remnant vegetation protection, land and foreshore erosion and the spreading of weeds and pests.

Looking after the atmosphere

Developing energy management plans for Council managed infrastructure and operations. Reducing landfill emissions and, in partnership with other levels of government, continue long-term air quality monitoring program for Darwin City in partnership with other stake holders.



