

A photograph of a tropical landscape. In the foreground, a wooden walkway leads towards a thatched-roof hut. Several palm trees are scattered throughout the scene, some in the mid-ground and others in the background. The sky is bright and clear. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

State of the Environment

The Environment

Council continues to actively encourage the protection and enhancement of the environment. To achieve this aim, Council has begun to develop and implement:

- A community focused Environmental Management Plan
- An Environmental Management System for Council's own operation
- A State of the Environment Report

The Environmental Management Plan will direct Council efforts to high priority issues and drive environmental improvement and protection programs. This will deliver social, cultural, economic and aesthetic benefits. Extensive public consultation and reporting will be a key cornerstone of this plan.

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

The State of the Environment Report will provide residents with data and information on Council's environmental performance and the nature and 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 *Cassiopeia* jellyfish study and water quality investigation program
- Telemetric Irrigation System improvements that provide the capacity to better manage our water resources

Environmental education

- Provision of environmental awareness and education programs at Darwin schools and indigenous communities
- Environmental awareness and training workshops and seminars for Council staff and contractors, including Waste Auditing training courses
- Development and implementation of a cane toad public awareness program in partnership with FrogWatch

Environmental rehabilitation & public health

- Foreshore erosion investigation and restoration programs
- Vegetation and weed management activities in Council's parks and reserves
- Mosquito control program
- Native vegetation mapping and remnant vegetation corridor planning

Pollution mitigation

- Stormwater management – gross pollutant trap efficiency assessments and preparation of an expansion plan for Darwin
- Campaigns to reduce littering of 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,
 - Parks and foreshore litter bin audit programs to ensure bins are placed appropriately and used efficiently

- Public place cleansing and litter control program
- Public place recycling – planning for the trial installation of recycling stations in Smith Street Mall and Mindil Beach
- Cities for Climate Protection – reducing Council’s greenhouse gas emissions and development of an Energy Reduction Plan for the city
- Renewable Energy Facility at Shoal Bay Regional Waste Disposal Site – capturing methane gas produced by landfill processes for conversion into green energy fed into the Power and Water Corporation’s electricity grid
- Pollution incident response activities

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 development and implementation of 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 Packing Industry Environment Council, the tyre industry, Bagot Community, Clean Up Australia Council, Greening Australia, Frog Watch and other councils in the region.

- Development and implementation of various scientific environmental studies based on Council scholarships arrangements with Charles Darwin University.

Environmental rehabilitation and public health

- Foreshore restoration programs
- Vegetation and weed management activities through Council parks and reserves
- Removal of coffee bush and replanting of Vestey’s Creek with rainforest plant species.
- Establishment of a Wallaby Management Plan for the management of wallabies at East Point.

Environmental initiatives have centered on actively protecting and enhancing the environment and include:

- Awarding of the Shoal Bay Recycling contract
- In partnership with Landfill Management Services, proving up the methane gas to energy project at the Shoal Bay Waste Management Facility
- Development of plans for the Shoal Bay Recycling Facility
- Agile Wallaby Management Plan, East Point Reserve
- Finalisation of the Environment Management Plan framework and policy
- Begin the examination of water management options
- Various applications for external funding to assist with research and provision of infrastructure aimed at achieving improved environmental outcomes such as collaborative research partnerships, Butt Littering Grant, National Heritage Trust (NHT) and Water Grants

Environmental Performance

This first annual Environment Report adds a new dimension to Council's traditional financial performance reporting.

Reporting environmental management performance

Darwin City Council's environmental performance is determined by Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation, community expectation and the nature of our responsibilities, activities, and operations.

Council has adopted the National State of Environment (SOE) State-Pressure-Response model for its first Environment Report:

- State – what is the current state of the local environment?
- Pressure – what pressures and stresses are placed on the environment by human activities and what changes and trends are evident from local monitoring data?
- Response – what action or response to evident changes have been taken to limit deterioration, rehabilitate and protect the environment?

In 2004 Council began the development of an Environmental Management Plan designed to manage the environment better by asking the community to assist in the identification of issues and values in Darwin. The Environmental Management Plan and its local, Darwin Environment Atlas, have provided the information and baseline data necessary to allow Council to report on the environment.

Performance and progress towards a sustainable future are reported against goals set in the Action Plan. Progress is reported against various measurable performance indicators which will allow Council to demonstrate and observe environmental changes over time in the following 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 has experienced substantial development and growth during 2004/05. 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:

- Appropriate management of storm water requires due consideration for quality as well as quantity issues to protect our wetlands, waterways and Darwin Harbour.
- 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 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 responses

A number of management response measures and actions have been developed or implemented to address priority issues in key focus areas. The 2004/05 initiatives are summarised below. Further information can be obtained from relevant Council departments and the Council website: www.darwin.nt.gov.au

New Initiatives

- **Development and growth:**
The finalisation and adoption of the Greater Darwin Regional Development Strategy, signed off in March 2005 by the six local government councils making up TOPROC, provides the strategies necessary to facilitate sustainable development and growth in the wider Darwin region.
- **Environmental planning:**
The completion of the Draft Gardens Precinct Masterplan and development of the Draft Central Darwin Streetscape Strategy and Contribution Plan for Stuart Park introduced sound environmental planning principles into Council's development assessment processes.
- **Society and culture:**
Council's capital works programs completed in 2004/05 included the \$650,000 stage extensions at the Botanic Gardens Amphitheatre, a popular venue hosting a range of cultural activities and programs, including performances by the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and other local, interstate and overseas artists and performers.
- **Community awareness and information:**
Darwin City Council's new website was launched in June 2005. The user-friendly site provides up to date information on Council activities, services and programs and a mechanism for public feedback and comments.

Management milestones 2004/05

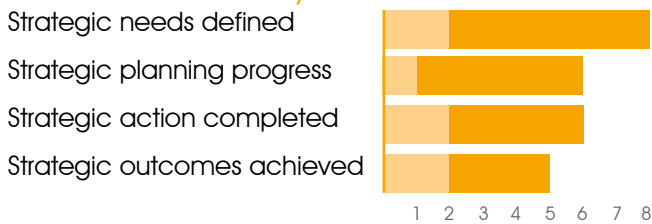
Major environmental management milestones during the reporting period included the development and implementation of the Environmental Protection Framework – Managing the Environment Today for a Healthy Tomorrow, the Environmental Atlas for Darwin and the associated Community Consultation Plan. All Environmental Management Plan documentation is accessible from the Council website.

Environmental performance summary 2004/05

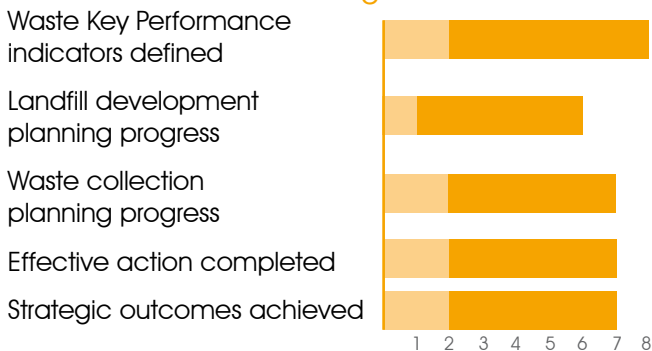
Improvements and progress is measured against performance achieved in the previous reporting year.



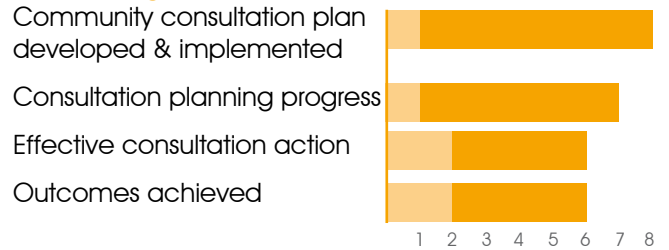
Road to sustainability



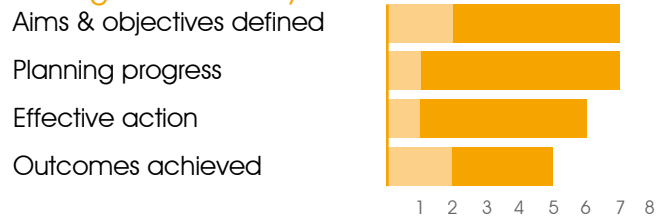
Sustainable waste management



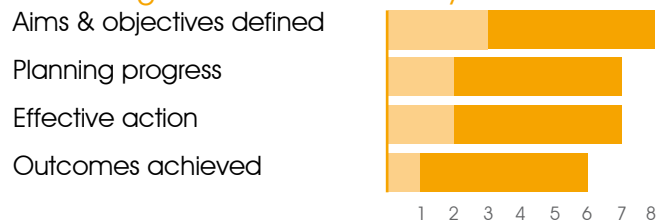
Consulting with the community



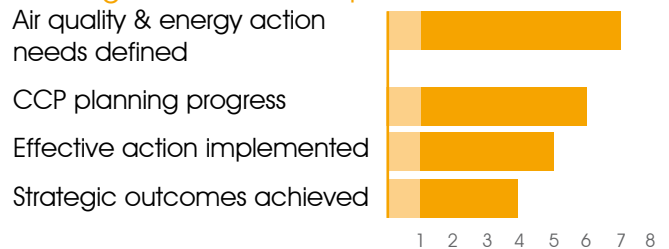
Caring for waterways



Protecting land and biodiversity



Looking after the atmosphere



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

To meet community and stakeholder expectations Darwin City Council will commence an extensive community consultation program in September 2005. Consultation results will influence and assist in the prioritisation of Council's future environmental management action and works programs.

Continuing the community awareness and information program, including schools, stakeholders and the community as a whole, is vitally important.

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, establishing a long-term air quality-monitoring program for Darwin city.