



Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee *Update*



Community supports a strong, planned approach for Darwin Harbour

The Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage and the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee (DHAC) released the draft *Darwin Harbour Regional Management Strategic Framework 2009-2013* in March 2009. As part of the consultation process, public forums were held throughout the Darwin Harbour region in April to provide the community with an opportunity to discuss the Strategic Framework and have their say.

During the meetings, participants clearly expressed their support for smarter management and responsible stewardship of the Darwin Harbour region. Feedback received from the community also resulted in the title of the draft Strategic Framework being changed to the *Darwin Harbour Strategy 2009-2015* (draft Strategy). The vision, goals and guidelines advanced in the draft *Darwin Harbour Strategy 2009-2015* were also strongly supported by the community.

Participants also identified the need for more long-term, strategic planning for the Darwin Harbour region and expressed concerns that development in the Harbour was preceding in an 'ad hoc' fashion. The issue of the possible cumulative, negative affects of new developments on the region's aesthetic, cultural, and environmental values was also raised.

How the broad goals of the draft Strategy would be implemented and enforced, and how the guidelines could be incorporated into existing legislation was discussed. These issues have been listened to by the Committee and will be used to improve the draft Strategy.

At the forum in Darwin the Chair of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Dr Andrew Tupper discussed the EPA's investigation into whether the existing legislation and policy frameworks were sufficient to guide the sustainable growth and use of Darwin Harbour and to protect the Harbour's natural environment as promoted by the draft Strategy. Dr Tupper's discussion was welcomed by participants and DHAC will provide further updates on the EPA's public release of a preliminary position paper expected in late 2009.

For more information about this investigation and the Terms of Reference visit www.epa.nt.gov.au/darwinharbour/index.html

More than 50 people participated in the public forums, while many others provided useful feedback on the draft Strategy through the DHAC website. The Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed as this process has resulted in helpful and useful feedback that will be used to finalise the *Darwin Harbour Strategy 2009-2015*.

New committee members welcomed

During the last two months four new members have been appointed to the Committee:

- Dr Melanie Bradley (Environment Centre Northern Territory)
- Mr Greg Constantine (Larrakia Development Corporation)
- Ms Donna Odegaard (Larrakia Radio, Community Representative)
- Ms Sue Sultana (Tek Ventures Diving Services, Community Representative)

The Committee farewelled Ms Prue Barnard, representative of the Environment Centre Northern Territory and the Australia Marine Conservation Society. DHAC would like to thank Prue for her service and her ongoing advocacy on behalf of the Harbour's marine life is appreciated.



Photo: Steve Trudgeon

Dr Melanie Bradley



Ms Donna Odegaard



Message from the Chair

With the conclusion of both the government and community consultation processes, DHAC is moving forward with the finalisation of the *Darwin Harbour Strategy 2009-2015* – a comprehensive guide for the responsible stewardship and sustainable development of the Darwin Harbour region. The Strategy will be released in the next few months, and I look forward to it being incorporated into Northern Territory Government policy and practices.

This month we received the draft Darwin Harbour Region Report Cards 2009 from our partners at the Aquatic Health Unit of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS). I look forward to sharing these with everyone who cares about water quality and want to learn more about the condition of the Harbour.

The strength of these Report Cards and overall harbour management

depends on a solid harbour monitoring program. In May, Dr David Parry of the Australian Institute of Marine Science gave a presentation to DHAC on a proposed Darwin Harbour research and monitoring program and a potential model for a Darwin Harbour monitoring program based on the Port Curtis Integrated Monitoring Program. Integrated monitoring presents a comprehensive, cost-effective and long-term approach to monitoring and is made possible by contributions from the major enterprises that benefit from the Harbour. As DHAC Chair, I believe that this model is worth considering as a way to pursue the ongoing monitoring of Darwin Harbour.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Robyn Henderson on the recent birth of her son, Jack Stewart Henderson and welcome Kate Roll as the new Project Coordinator.

In closing, with the Dry season here, many visitors have come to the Top End to enjoy the region's fishing, sunsets and natural beauty. Through their eyes and experiences we are reminded of the wonderful environment in which we live, the importance of Darwin Harbour to the region, and the responsibilities that we share as its stewards.

Bill Stuchbery
 Chair

DHAC News in Brief

New Urban Design Strategy

DHAC Chair Bill Stuchbery and Project Coordinator Kate Roll attended a training session held by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure on their newly launched Darwin Harbour Water Sensitive Urban Design Strategy (available at www.equatica.com.au/Darwin). DHAC was pleased to note the strong linkages made in the WSUD Strategy to DHAC's draft *Darwin Harbour Strategy 2009-2015*.

DHAC Groups Merge

DHAC has established the Ecosystems Monitoring and Research Group (EMRG) through the merger of DHAC's Ecosystems Research and Ecosystems Monitoring Groups. The EMRG will provide advice on scientific matters and continue to support the Water Quality Protection Plan.

Harbour Report Cards

How healthy is Darwin Harbour? Does the water at favourite fishing spots or local beaches meet water quality objectives? How do we monitor and measure harbour health?

These questions, and more, are addressed in the Darwin Harbour Region Report Cards 2009 which will be released in August 2009.

These Report Cards will provide information on our Harbour's water quality and describe the various pressures on the Harbour's ecosystems. They are based on data collected and analysed by NRETAS' Aquatic Health Unit and the work was supported by DHAC and its Ecosystems Monitoring Group.

For more information on the Darwin Harbour Region Report Cards visit www.nt.gov.au/nreta/water/aquatic/



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World Environment Day

DHAC attended the World Environment Day event at East Point Reserve on 6 June 2009. DHAC and NRETAS displayed a range of information from environmental initiatives to weed management. DHAC's attendance provided an opportunity to engage with the community and reinforce the Committee's commitment to the protection and sustainable development of the region, now and in the future.

DHAC thanks the Charles Darwin University Environment Collective for their invitation to attend the event and for coordinating the day's activities.