

Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

Message from the Lord Mayor

Darwin is a truly multicultural, cosmopolitan city with many natural and built attractions. It is home to people from over 60 different nationalities and has, over the last five years, recorded the second fastest capital city population increase (1.7%) in Australia.

Despite the rapid expansion of inner city living and the healthy growth of industry and commerce, Darwin does not currently experience the level of environmental degradation and pollution that is experienced in high-density cities elsewhere in Australia.

As the sphere of government closest to Darwin's people, the Darwin City Council is proud to have developed an Environmental Protection Framework for our City as a means to care for our environment and safeguard our unique outdoor lifestyle.

The title of this framework "MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT TODAY FOR A HEALTHY TOMORROW" captures Darwin City Council's strategic objectives. These objectives include the provision of leadership and working with residents, stakeholders and other levels of government to achieve a future where environmental issues are addressed and economic growth is supported based on sustainability principles.

The framework will provide valuable direction as Council embarks on the development of our first Environmental Management Plan and will assist Elected Members in their decision making.

The Environmental Management Plan will be a dynamic, living document and will be the subject to periodic review to ensure relevance and to respond to emerging issues.

I invite you to participate actively in the development and implementation of the Environmental Management Plan by providing us with your views on issues affecting you and your environment.

Peter Adamson
Lord Mayor



Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

Introduction

On the 11th of May 2004, the 18th Darwin City Council unanimously approved the development of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and an Environmental Management System (EMS). The decision to develop an Environmental Management Plan reflects Council's commitment to protecting the municipality's natural resources so that they may be enjoyed by future generations. Darwin is perhaps Australia's only Capital City that is still able to boast about the abundance of native fauna, clean air and pristine waterways. Darwin City Council is committed to ensuring that these natural resources are managed in a sustainable framework.

Specifically the Darwin City Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the sustainable management of intrinsic natural resources and ecological processes.

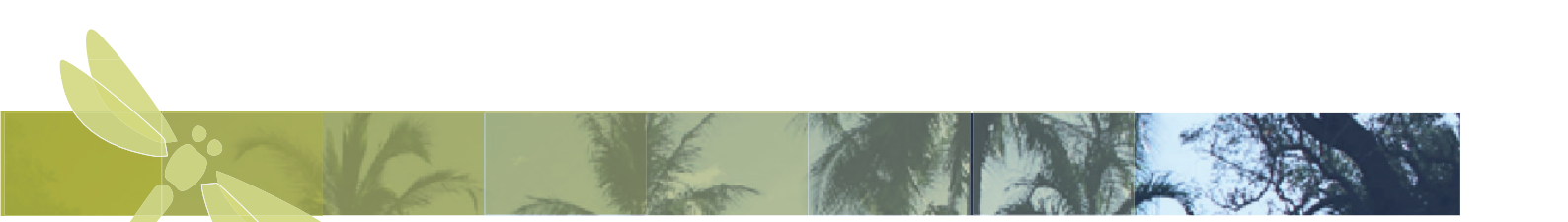
Why do we need an EMP?

Public interest in the appropriate management of the environment has increased dramatically during the past decade. Environmental and natural resource management has become a key priority for local government across Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2000-01 data shows that:

- Local government spent \$ 2.5 billion on environmental protection measures and \$1.8 million on natural resource management;
- Some 22% of local government expenditure is environmentally related;
- State, Territory or Federal government grants only support an estimated 7% of this expenditure.

Across Australia, local government has seen an expansion of management roles beyond the traditional "Roads, Rates and Rubbish" largely due to:

1. **Public expectations** Communities increasingly expect their elected representatives to :
 - Demonstrate an interest in, and active management of, the local environment, and
 - Engage in consultation that allows their voices to be heard and opinions to be included in the decisions that affect the environment in which they live.
2. **Environmental legislation** Environmental Protection Acts for NSW, VIC, QLD, SA and WA has resulted in the formation of Environmental Protection Authorities or Agencies which have delegated significant environmental management and enforcement responsibilities to local government. Currently the Northern Territory Government is considering whether or not to establish an (NT) Environmental Protection Agency. If the Northern Territory Government was to establish an Environmental Protection Agency it is reasonable to anticipate an increased legislated role in environmental management for the Darwin City Council based on the experience of the other states.



Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

Development of an Environmental Management Plan for Darwin will demonstrate to the community that their concerns and views are heard, reflected in action and represented by their Elected Members. The EMP will also ensure that Council is in a position to respect current, and embrace new, environmental obligations.

What does Darwin City Council currently do for the environment?

Darwin City Council's ongoing financial commitment to environmental protection is substantial. As the Northern Territory's largest urban municipality, Darwin City Council's ongoing environmental management responsibilities and programs include the:

- provision of solid waste collection, disposal and recycling services;
- maintenance and management of over 600 ha of bushland, parks and sports reserves;
- delivery and support of educational activities which increase the re-use and recycling of valuable resources and the community's environmental awareness;
- delivery of a variety of environmental and natural resource management projects such as:
 - the installation of pollutant traps to reduce sedimentation, litter/rubbish in our waterways;
 - pest and weed management programs to maintain the integrity of Council managed parks, bushlands and reserves;
 - fauna and flora management programs aimed at maintaining habitats and in turn biodiversity;
- Provision of comments and advice on planning and development issues and proposals in Darwin and the wider region;
- Participation in community and government projects that improve the environment and our way of life.
- \$500,000 has been allocated for the construction of a Materials Reuse and Recycling facility at Shoal Bay Waste Management Facility.
- The construction of a Gas to Energy Facility which harvests hazardous landfill methane gas and converts it into electricity is also currently under construction

Improving our environmental performance and meeting new challenges

As the level of government closest to the people and the environment the Darwin City Council is proud to be a leader in the area of environmental management. The development and implementation of an EMP and EMS will ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the Council is able to address environmental concerns and issues effectively and in a timely and sustainable manner.

Council has adopted a two-pronged approach to the management of environmental issues under its jurisdiction. This approach involves:

- 1 Development and implementation of a community focused Environmental Management Plan for Darwin. This plan will focus efforts and drive Council's environmental improvement and protection programs to ensure maximum social, cultural, economic and aesthetic benefits. Extensive public consultation and reporting will be an inherent component of the plan.

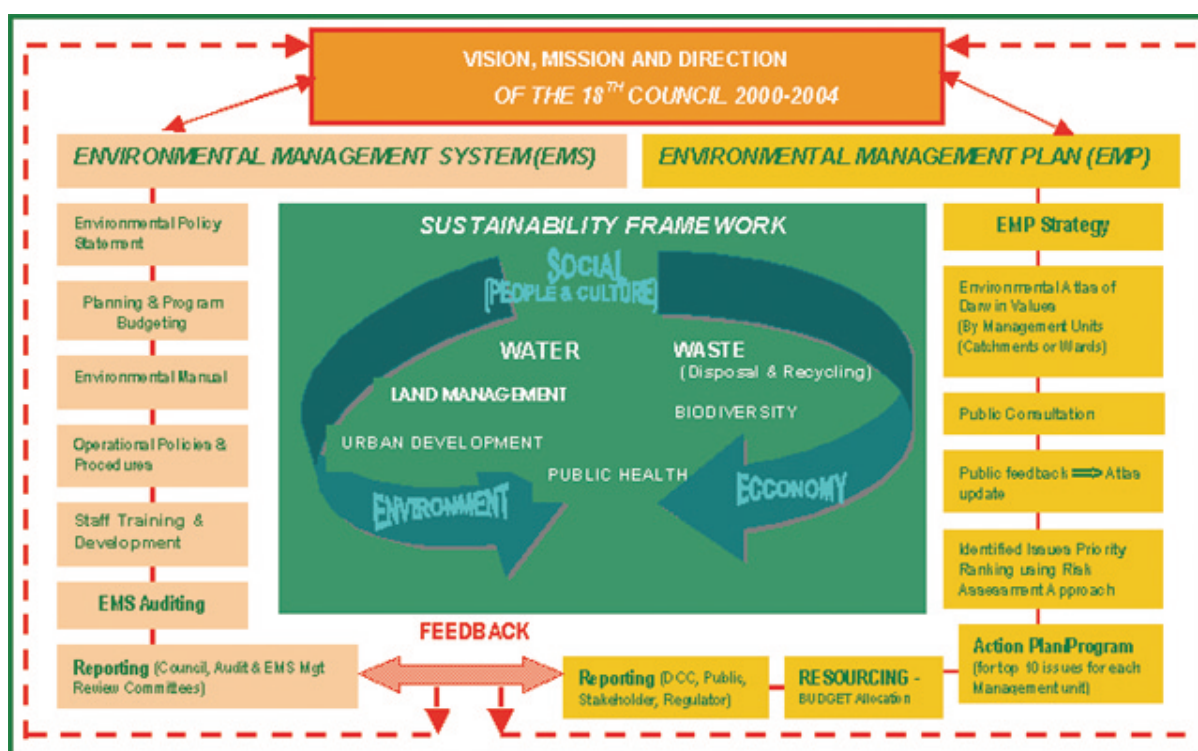


Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

2. Development and implementation of an organisationally focussed Environmental Management System. This system will establish appropriate best practice management for Council's own activities, operations and services.

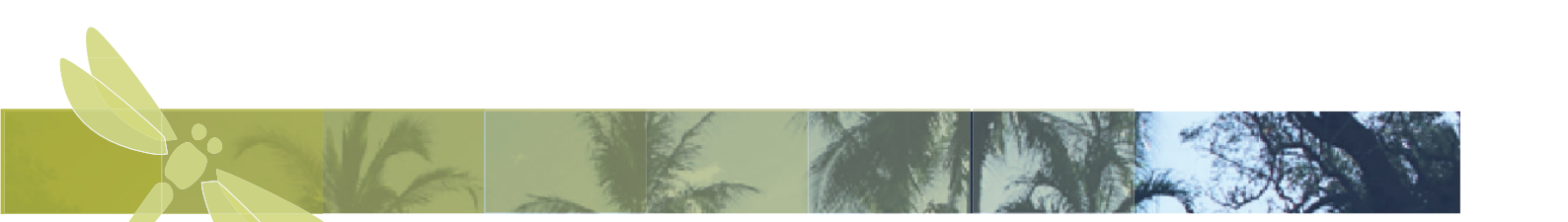
Figure 1 Strategic Environmental Management Framework



Benefits of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP)

The EMP together with the EMS forms the basis for the implementation of a sustainability framework for Darwin. In addition, the EMP provides:

1. A valuable management tool, able to:
 - Disseminate information to community, stakeholders and regulators regarding Council's environmental initiatives; and
 - Capture public opinion and community expectation and feed this information back into Council's Strategic Action Plan, Capital Works and Maintenance Programs ;
2. A mechanism for:
 - The building of co-operative working relationships between Council and other Local, State and Federal Governments that will enable environmental issues and concerns in the Darwin region to be addressed; and
 - Attracting funding and increasing the strength of Council's voice in matters concerning the development of Darwin and the wider region; and
 - Collecting, collating, analysing and disseminating environmental data and information necessary to manage issues and problems timely, efficiently and cost effectively.



Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

Benefits of an Environmental Management System (EMS)

Council's EMS will serve to strengthen organisational capacity which will enable better management of activities that have the potential to impact on the environment. It will provide the opportunity to address environmental risks systematically through allocation of resources, assignment of responsibilities, and ongoing evaluation of practices, procedures and processes. Based on the International Standard ISO 14001:1996, the EMS is Council's choice for demonstrating due diligence, environmental commitment and appropriate best practice management to regulators and the community.

Process For The Development Of The Environmental Management Plan The Adopted Emp Model

- Council's Environmental Management Plan will be a publicly accessible "living" document and will be subject to periodic review and update.
- To facilitate effective and targeted community consultation and the development of site specific action plans, the larger Darwin geographic area to be managed by dividing it into "environmental management units" (EMUs). (Example - Appendix 3 & 4)
- The distribution of contaminants from a source to a sink (waterway or land) depends largely on local topography and natural and man-made water flows. It is for this reason that Council has adopted as the most appropriate delineation for Darwin's environmental management units' scientifically rigorous catchment management methodologies and processes.

Process Steps

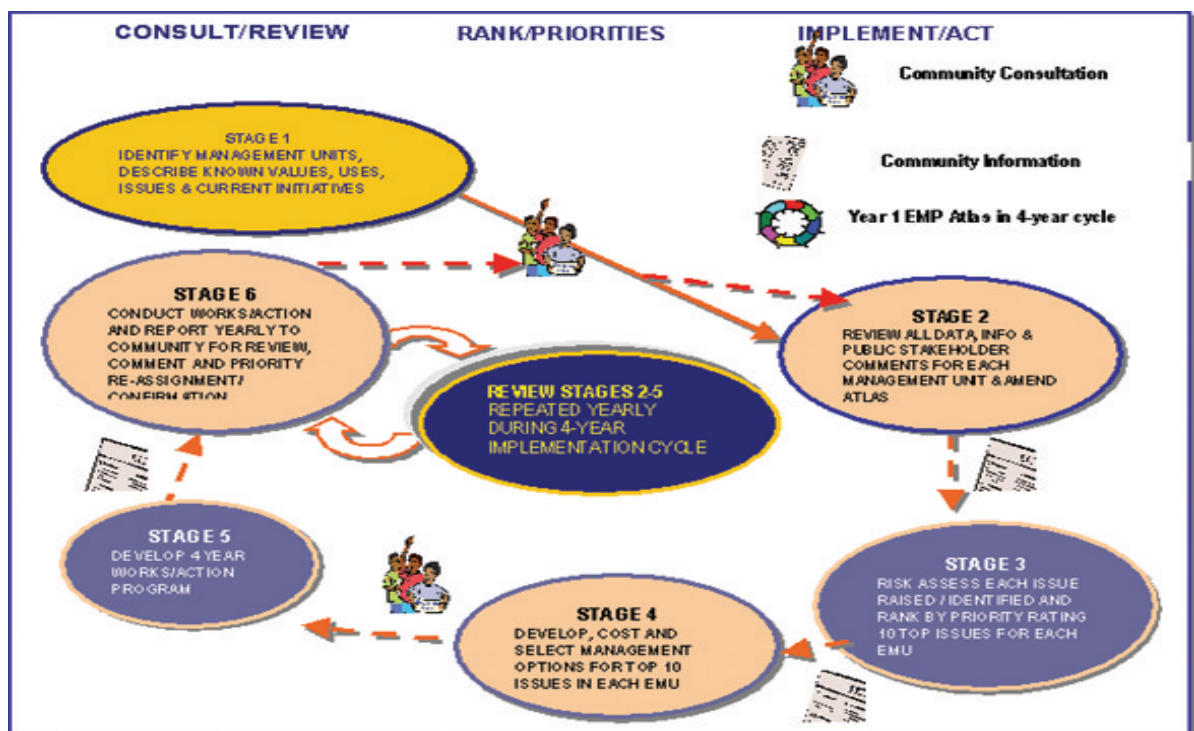
1. Prepare an EMP Strategy Paper
2. Prepare a City Atlas of Values by:
 - Dividing the Darwin geographic area into 24 Environmental Management Units (EMUs) based on catchment boundaries or sub-catchment features such as creeks and waterways;
 - Collating all known information, issues and area specific programs for each of the 24 EMUs into an Atlas Summary;
 - Forming one EMP Advisory Committee, together with Stakeholder and Regulator working groups and incorporating knowledge from these groups into the draft Atlas,
 - Presenting the draft Atlas to Council's EMP Advisory Committee, Environment & Infrastructure Committee and then to Council for discussion, comment and approval.
3. Community and stakeholder consultation
 - Commence community consultation program using the Atlas as the issue and comment tool (potential consultation options could include: letterbox drops, website access to Atlas for comment, Schools, Workshops, Media etc)
4. Action Plans/Operational Plans/EMPs
 - Incorporate community comments into Atlas and priority rank issues identified
 - Develop yearly works program/action plan for top 10 issues in each of the 24 EMUs and include in Budget submissions
 - Add Action Plan to Atlas and distribute to public/stakeholders for information and comment
 - Pull all information together to create one EMP for each of the 24 EMUs.

Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

5. Collate EMPs for each management unit and aggregate as the overall Council EMP
 - Launch the 24 EMPs in each EMU area after Council approval.
6. Annual report and continue community consultation program
 Yearly reporting on completed actions/programs and review of annual public responses from the consultation program, will confirm or capture changed priorities and issues to ensure the EMP and EMU Atlas remains current.

Figure 3 - City Atlas Of Values



Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

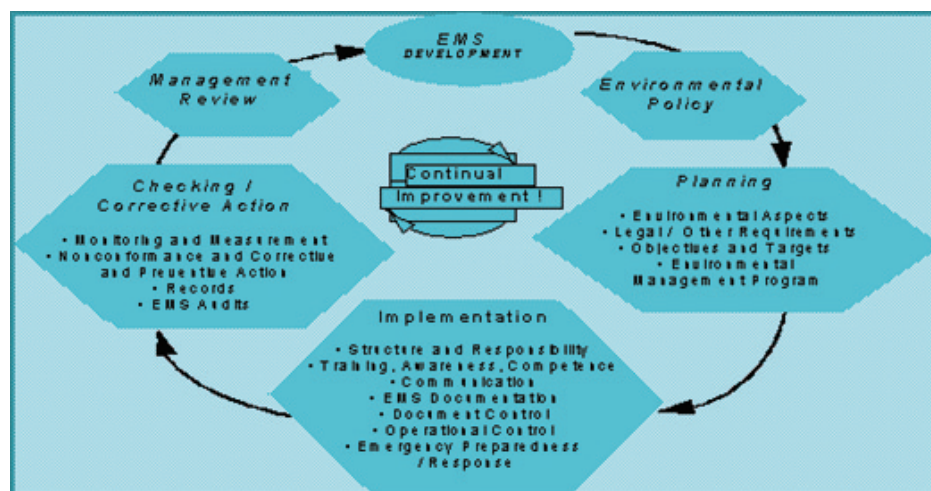
Process For The Development Of The Environmental Management System (EMS)

Council's EMS will be implemented to improve our environmental performance through improvements to our internal procedures and processes. The public components of the EMS will be Council's Environmental Policy.

As with most successful Environmental Management Systems, Council's EMS will build, expand on and complement existing procedures and processes.

An Environmental Management System is defined by the International EMS Standard ISO 14001:1996 as 'the part of the overall management system that includes organisational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining the environmental policy.' This definition identifies clearly the importance of an EMS in supporting the delivery of our Environmental Policy objectives.

Figure 2 - ems schematic



The key elements of Council's EMS are:

1. **The Environmental Policy** - which states the strategic environmental performance goals and provides guidelines for application of the EMS; and
2. **The Procedures Manual and Environmental Management Programs** - which provide a set of management steps, focussing on achievement of Council's environmental goals that form part of the wider day to day operational management of activities; and
3. **The Procedures Registers** - which contains all working documents and procedures generated to ensure incident minimisation and sound environmental management of all business activities.
4. **Training and Awareness Programs** - which ensure staff and contractors, are environmentally aware and sufficiently competent to perform their duties in an environmentally sensitive manner.
5. **The Environmental Review (Aspects/Impacts) register and supporting documents** - which identify Council activities that have the potential to impact on the environment and summarise mitigation measures in place based on a risk assessment approach.



Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

An Environmental Management System (EMS) is an effective and efficient management tool that will be used to reduce environmental impacts from Council operations, improve environmental performance and demonstrate to stakeholders, regulators and the community Council's commitment to excellence in all aspects of its business activities.

The schedule for Darwin City Council's EMS Development and Implementation Plan can be found in Appendix 1.

The Strategic Environment Framework - Benefits & Commitments

Financial Commitments

The development of the EMP/EMS is funded within the 2004/05 Council budget through a special project allocation of \$100,000.

It is anticipated that the Environmental Management System can be developed and implemented to ISO 14001:1996 within 2 years and without a requirement of additional funds. A commitment from Council's Training and Development budget will however be required.

It is anticipated that the Environmental Management Plan and associated Community Consultation framework will require additional funding however, this will be dependent on the nature of the issues identified for action.

Some funding assistance will be available through Federal and Territory project grants.

Community Consultation:

Involvement of the community in environmental issues is integral to realising ecologically sustainable development. A strong focus on environmental education, information and participation in action will allow the community to develop a sense of ownership and promote environmental responsible lifestyles.

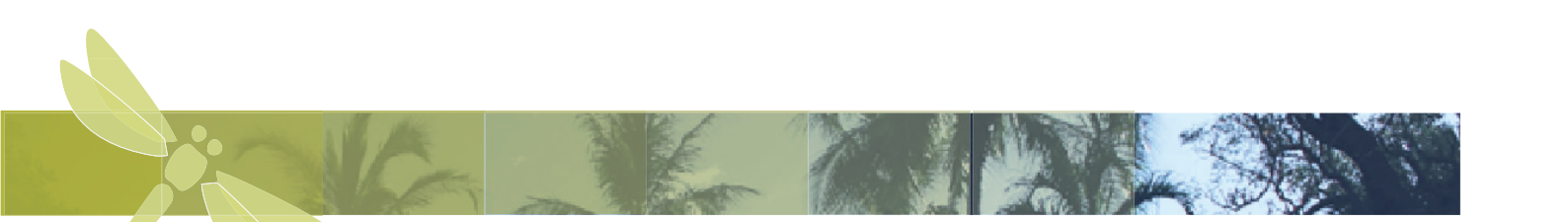
Corporate Outcomes:

The development of an EMP and EMS will provide Council with a stronger voice in regional issues and will assist in decision making. The EMP's will capture public opinion and provide community mandates to pursue certain issues.

Environmental Outcomes:

The systematic consultative environmental management processes proposed in the EMP/EMS framework will benefit the natural and built environs of Darwin by:

- identifying priority issues and
- allowing for the targeting of action where needed



Environmental Protection

Framework for Darwin

Community Health and Safety Outcomes

The strategic framework “MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT TODAY FOR A HEALTHY TOMORROW” represents a positive contribution towards maintaining environmental health, amenity and quality of life for Darwin residents.

Have your say and get involved

While great strides can be made by Council to develop a healthy and safe environment in Darwin, its primary obligation and function is to develop and implement policies and programs representative of the community’s wishes. It is for this reason that working in partnership with Stakeholders, State and Federal Governments, and most of all, the community is necessary if this strategic framework for a sustainable Darwin is to be successful.

Act now and contact Darwin City Council to find out how you can be involved.

Contact: Darwin City Council’s
Environment Manager, Angelika Hesse
Civic Centre Harry Chan Avenue
PO Box 84 DARWIN NT 0801
Phone: 08 8930 0530
E-mail: a.hesse@darwin.nt.gov.au

Environmental Management Plan Chairperson

Alderman Jo Sangster

Phone: 0408 746 487

E-mail: sangjo@austarnet.com.au

Environmental Management Plan member

Alderman Garry Lambert

Phone: 0401 119 118

E-mail: g.lambert@darwin.nt.gov.au