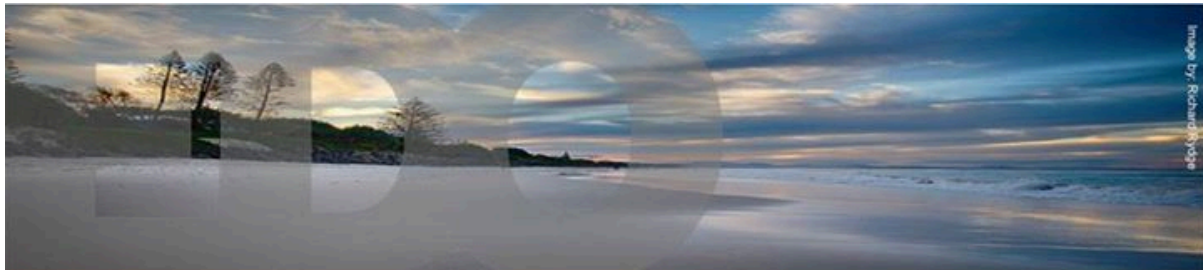


FREE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP IN BYRON BAY



FREE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP IN BYRON BAY

Monitoring and Enforcing Environmental Laws

WHEN: Thursday 26 February 2015
5:30pm — 7:30pm

WHERE: Byron Community Centre
(Cavanbah Room)
69 Jonson Street
Byron Bay

RSVP: For further info & to RSVP
contact EDO NSW —

Call: 02 6621 1070

Visit: www.edonsw.org.au/byron_2015

Email: education@edonsw.org.au

Together with the Byron Residents Group, EDO NSW will hold a free workshop in Byron Bay explaining how the community can monitor and enforce compliance with environmental and planning laws. The workshop will cover practical steps the community can take to protect itself and the environment from the impacts of development, even

Projects including the West Byron development, the Belongil rock wall, and Ewingsdale seniors housing development will be used as examples to show where the community can engage in monitoring, compliance and enforcement of laws.



- Successful environmental outcomes using the law
- Broad environmental expertise
- Independent and accessible

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Image by: Richard Rydge

A civil society protects its fragile marine life

Mary Gardner

The recent calm of summer goes deep. I snorkel out to the reef and find one other woman and seven juvenile green turtles. We all look at each other from below and above the crystal blue water of the Cape Byron Marine Park. One turtle has two metal tags clipped to its front flippers. The tags were put on by people from the Australian Seabird Rescue in Ballina. Once this creature nearly died, eating a plastic bag or tangling with fishing debris. But she was found, nursed back to health and released. It's a good sign that she is with other turtles again. To use a local phrase, it's a 'positive change for marine life'. That catchphrase is the name of the non-profit organisation (NPO) based in Byron Bay, founded in 2011 by Karl Goodsell. The group is another good sign. With a thousand members, Karl and his team run research about plastic debris on Main Beach and Broken Head and campaign against shark finning and the degradation of the Great Barrier Reef. The group are filming current controversies in Queensland, where expansion of coal mining and shipping meets with community and international protest. UNESCO is waiting for the Australian government to meet its recommendations for care of this World Heritage site. Last month, WWF and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, two other NPOs, published their assessment. They explain how the federal and state government are both failing as caretakers and call for positive change. Positive Change for Marine Life is one of the young players in the new branch of civil society. Such community based groups are active in their region as well as in the national and international arenas. The management team are young adults and many of its members are young people who gladly wear their hearts on their sleeves. Through this NPO, they are involved with some of the most critical issues of our times. This is one remarkable facet of the new civil society, which is influencing policy makers worldwide. The director of the Centre for Civil Society Vern Hughes writes there are 700,000 not-for-profits in Australia, of which 665,000 are entirely voluntary. From the five per cent that do employ staff, there are 20 groups whose leaders are being called together for the November summit of the C20. Yes, the Civil Society Summit, in Brisbane, which will address and work with the G20. One of them is Dermot O'Gorman from Australia WWF. Yes, that same group calling the government to task about the Great Barrier Reef. Just as does Positive Change for Marine Life. Marine problems The marine problems addressed by civil society are enormous. Each of its elements is connected. A few weeks ago, for the first time in my life, I swam alongside an adult turtle. It was about 1.6 metres in length and therefore likely to be well over 100 kilograms. Not so long ago, such large animals were quite common and numerous. They lived crowded with other marine life in waters which were 30 per cent less acidic than now. That acidification is still rising as the ocean absorbs more carbon dioxide. This is the 'other carbon problem'. The change plays out in many ways. Most recently, scientists are reporting fish that are acting more nervously. Their sense of smell is not as good as before. Neither is their vision as sharp. Their eggs and sperm are not as

fertile. A well-documented impact of changing acidity is the recent death of billions of baby oysters at the leading commercial hatchery in the US state of Washington. Similarly, on February 24, another company reported the death of 10 million scallops in Georgia Strait. Aquaculture faces many hazards so these companies monitor their waters very closely. If they can identify such losses with their captive animals, what does this mean for all the others in the wild? Internationally, civil society is promoting the use of renewable energy and contesting expansion of fossil fuel industries. Contributing to acid ocean domino effects are the planned expansions of coal and gas mining here in Australia. The NSW/QLD schemes hope that by 2020, 944 million tonnes would be shipped overseas, up from 156 million in 2011. That's why many people see divesting from these industries as a moral imperative. It's also linked to their support of the Coal Seam Gas Free efforts, another action group of civil society. Protection actions and campaigns are important social forces. They are also sources of learning and with that, other kinds of change. Around Byron, the volunteers identifying marine plastics on the beach tell others how it affects turtles that they can point to in the Bay. If civil society can help tip events in some positive ways, when they are seniors themselves, they can swim with not just a single adult turtle, but many, many more of them.