

Editorial

I'm sitting at my computer in Alice Springs and it's raining; not much, but yes, it is indeed raining. Weather statistics for the month of September inform me that our total rainfall this year has been 55.8 mm! For those of you on the fringes of this wide brown land experiencing a wet springtime, it's important to remember what a dry place most of Australia is. Central Australia is presently making plans to become a world leader in arid land / solar power research and development, good news indeed. However exploiting natural advantages must include the need to protect their underpinning. Soil and vegetation conservation remains a neglected area of environmental control, with several jurisdictions (including the Northern Territory) lacking effective legislative schemes or the will to implement and enforce them.

The dedication of Farrier, Lyster and Pearson in their *Environmental Law Handbook* (reviewed in the last issue) says it all: 'This book remains dedicated to the arid and semi-arid lands, and the people of the Western Division of New South Wales, until government develops the will to address the most intractable environmental and social problem facing this State'. New South Wales is arguably our most progressive State in terms of environmental law, yet if it has failed to meet the challenges of protecting arid and semi-arid lands, what hope have the rest of us? Environmental legislation must include requirements for protecting these lands. While they may lack the glamour of our megadiverse reefs and rainforests, they remain host to vast numbers of plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. I urge you all to remember and act on this whenever you can.