

Mudgee District Environment Group - **Save the Drip Fact Sheet**

50k's north of Mudgee just off the Ulan Rd on the Goulburn River is the Great Dripping Wall. Locals affectionately call it "The Drip". This amazing place is being threatened by Coal Mines. In 2014 MDEG stepped up the "Save the Drip" campaign to have the whole area from the road to the end of "The Drip" included in the Goulburn River National Park. The result of this was an announcement by the government that "The Drip" would be protected by becoming a National Park. The community believes that this is the "Fact". Sadly it is only half the story.

A Deed of Agreement was signed between Moolarben Coal and the State Government/National Parks in 2015. In this document it was agreed that:

1. A small parcel of land around "The Dripping Wall" became National Park.
2. Moolarben Coal would hand back their land by March 2017 to become a State Conservation Area (SCA). Note this still has not been finalised!

The members of Mudgee District Environment Group have two major concerns.

1. Moolarben Coal future use of the State Conservation Area for mining activities
2. Future mining north of The Drip

The Deed of Agreement raises serious issues that impact on the long term conservation of "The Drip". Moolarben Coal will in the State Conservation Area:

- Maintain ownership of everything below the depth restriction of 50metres
- Retain subsurface rights for tunnels
- Be granted surface rights via Licence and Easement

A State Conservation Area gives a measure of protection. However the tunnels under the river are a concern. They will convey coal, trucks and workers to and from the yet to be approved coal fields north of The Drip to the southern loading facility. At this stage there is uncertainty around the issue of the easement & surface activities.

Mining activities north of The Drip will be a risky venture causing damage to the surface (heavily vegetated and rugged/pagoda country) and interfering with existing sensitive groundwater flow paths to The Dripping Wall.

The work done by National Parks in upgrading the car park, picnic area, signs and walking paths to The Drip is much appreciated. However the public is misled from the moment they arrive.

- The Entrance Sign proclaims "Goulburn River National Park" when in fact this area is "under licence for NPWS for management. The real National Park only starts close to the "The Drip" itself, after the Arch.
- It was disappointing to see on the Visitor Information Sign a misleading Map. It shows the National Park extending south of the river when in fact this is land already approved for Moolarben Coal underground long wall mine 4.
- Does this really matter? Yes it does! The signs give a false sense of security.

Water issues putting the Goulburn River & “The Drip” at Risk:

1. A drilling program to establish an extensive dewatering bore field has been commenced opposite the Drip south of the river in preparation for the Moolarben Underground Mine 4. Why are they commencing this now 5 years before planned mine start in 2022?
2. The groundwater monitoring program is inadequate to establish background / baseline conditions and risk to the flow in Goulburn River.
3. Increased river discharge of mine water. Moolarben Coal has lodged yet another Modification (14) which includes an increase to 20 mega litres per day – 900 EC. This will significantly increase salt load in Goulburn River. They are obviously expecting to produce more water than the originally predicted. Underground 1 is producing 60L/s ~ 5 Million litres a day- when it was supposed to be a “dry mine”.
4. The dewatering of upper Triassic aquifers was experienced in the Ulan mine. It is still to be seen if Modification 14 will include a new groundwater model that acknowledges this problem.
5. The Deed requires Moolarban Coal to establish monitoring piezos (monitoring bores) into assess hydrogeology. This hasn't happened yet!

Why did the Goulburn River dry up at The Drip Picnic Area in January 2018?

Coal mining (Open cut and long wall) in the headwaters of the river at Ulan have been extracting increasing amounts of ground water and intercepting rainfall runoff for many years (Around 15-30 Million litres per day). Water excess from the mine is discharged (partially treated) down the river. Just before Christmas the mines stopped discharging water which, in combination with the hot dry weather caused the river to suddenly dry up.

Note: The river at the Drip and Corner Gorge maintained a flow throughout the 1980s drought - this was pre-mine expansion and more severe than the millennium drought. The current dry state of the river is a worry. The small tributary upstream of the Drip called Bobadeen Creek (where the foot bridge is) in summer was flowing strongly. This goes to show the cease of flow in the river is not from natural causes.

Further expansion of mining close to the Drip will significantly exacerbate this and threaten the long term viability of the river and groundwater system.

What actions can I take to Save the Drip?

Add your name to Save the Drip email list and support our activities.

Make a donation to Mudgee District Environment Group/Save the Drip

Become a member of Mudgee District Environment Group

Write letters to the papers and members of parliament

Face Book – Read, Comment and Share posts on Save the Drip Face Book site

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