

I wish to object to approval for Stage 2 of the Moolarben Coal Project. The expansion of longwall coalmining in this significant area is in serious conflict with the closeness of the Goulburn River National Park and the outstanding aesthetic and scientific values of the Dripping Gorge and Corner Gorge which are not protected by the National Park, and in fact have no protection at all under this plan.

The sculptural rock and ironstone formations drip clear spring water that seep through the porous rock supporting ferns, bottlebrushes and weeping grasses. The river corridor and adjacent escarpment has an extensive Aboriginal heritage and includes the Hands on Rock site (heritage listed) and a rock artwork by famous Sydney artist Brett Whiteley .

The company's own assessment of the impact of its project (which has been amended a number of times since approval for Stage 1) concedes that there will be harmful impact upon a number of attributes which contribute to the area's significance, including:

- Removal of 157 hectares of Critically endangered ecological communities
- Additional coal mining for 24 years 24 hours a day 7 days a week
- Large extraction of groundwater and interference with aquifers. The planned dewatering process within the headwaters of the Goulburn River is likely to impact on the base flow of the Goulburn River and interfere with surrounding aquifers, surrounding agricultural bores and groundwater dependant ecosystems.
- Removal of a large number of Aboriginal heritage sites of significance and disturbance of others
- Likely instability and subsidence along the cliff affecting Aboriginal artworks of significance.
- Loss of Aboriginal archaeological sites of significance which probably derive from the Goulburn River valley being used as a trading route by Aboriginal people.
- Impact on threatened fauna through loss of wildlife corridors and direct impact, such as the Powerful Owl and the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater.

This scale and duration of mining is totally inappropriate only a few hundred metres from an area of natural beauty, where people go to bushwalk, appreciate a unique geological formation and engage in passive recreation.

In fact it is incredible that such an iconic natural feature has been allowed to be purchased by a Chinese coal company which could ban public access to the feature at any time. The lack of understanding for the significance of the Gorge is evident in the fact that initially the plan was to locate the mine only 50 metres away. The Drip and Corner Gorge should be added to Goulburn River National Park. The impacts on biodiversity, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and water sources are unacceptable. The cumulative impact with Ulan Mine, Moolarben Stage 1 and Wilpinjong Mine is too great to be visited upon the local community and the environment.

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