

Productivity Commission

The Dee River

The Dee River in Mt Morgan, Central Queensland is heavily impacted by the historic Mount Morgan gold mine. The Dee is reputed to be one of the most polluted rivers in Australia.

The Mount Morgan mine is located adjacent to the Dee River and continues to impact on the river system through acid mine drainage. The first 20kms of the river after the mine is consistently polluted. However when rain falls in the upper Dee the entire length of the Dee River can be affected by metal-rich acid flows. In the 2000/2001 wet season 87,000 megalitres of highly contaminated water flowed down the river resulting in over 25,000 fish killed up to 65 kms downstream of the minesite.

Impacts upon agricultural produce, macroinvertebrates, fish and freshwater mussels have been investigated through a Research Project. The research project consists of two Masters students from Central Queensland University studying the chemistry and biology of the river. The project was initiated by the landcare group and is sponsored by Landcare (through NHT, Banana and Mt Morgan Shire Councils) and Natural Resources and Mines.

The Dee River is at the top of the Fitzroy catchment and in its present state is a concern to all those downstream who rely on its water quality. This includes farmers, towns for water supply and recreational users

The level of the Mt Morgan mine open cut pit is now at a stage where it has an annual 50% probability of overflow which would result in a 4 fold increase in pollution levels entering the Dee River. To date the pit has not overflowed and all pollution from the site has been a result of runoff and seepage.

The Wowan Dululu Landcare Group has been working with Local, State and Federal Governments since 1996 to find solutions to this problem.

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