



Our ref: DOC23/964136

Dr Amanda Cohn MLC
Chair
Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health
Parliament of NSW
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email: portfoliocommittee2@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Chair

I refer to Portfolio Committee (PC) No. 2's Inquiry into the current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales and to the hearing on Friday 27 October 2023.

Response to questions on notice

Please find enclosed the EPA's response to the two questions taken on notice.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the uncorrected transcript. I would like to make no corrections or point of clarification to my evidence.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN BEAMAN PSM
Executive Director Regulatory Practice and Services

Encl

13 November 2023

Portfolio Committee No. 2's Inquiry into the current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales

**Stephen Beaman
Executive Director Regulatory Practice and Services
Environment Protection Authority**

EPA response to questions on notice (page 67 of the transcript)

Question 1:

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What's the safe level of mercury in that sediment in their rainwater tanks?

STEPHEN BEAMAN: There are a range of heavy metals in the sediment and the particles in those tanks. We've given that data to the EPA expert panel. That data has also gone to the health expert panel. There was no concern expressed by both of those panels in range to the sediment concentrations. The sediment concentrations were typically what we see in the literature from sediment in tank samples from around Australia.

The advice is from the enHealth guidelines in 2010, Guidance on use of rainwater tanks on page 24. The way that you minimise your exposure is you should inspect your tanks every two to three years to remove the sediment particles from the bottom of the tanks.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Would you be able to table for the Committee that evidence you're saying in terms of the comparison of the tanks around the country, the locations, as much as you can?

STEPHEN BEAMAN: We're going to publish it next week.

Answer 1:

On 8 November 2023, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) released two reports following investigations into metals and sediments in domestic tank water around the Cadia gold mine. These reports form part of our wider investigation into Cadia's mining operations and licence compliance. The EPA's Independent Expert Panel reviewed and provided input to the reports and advised that the conclusions are supported by the data.

These reports are available on the EPA website:

- An investigation into metals in domestic tanks water around the Newmont gold mine in Cadia (EPA November 2023)
www.epa.nsw.gov.au/-/media/epa/corporate-site/resources/community/23p4476-tank-water-metals-at-cadia.pdf?la=en&hash=A2EB43564FFC4806A0CDBB7B3DC605BAB84ACEC8
- An investigation into metals in sediment from domestic rainwater tanks water around the Newmont gold mine in Cadia (EPA November 2023)
www.epa.nsw.gov.au/-/media/epa/corporate-site/resources/community/23p4477-tank-sediment-metals-at-cadia.pdf?la=en&hash=79AFDF28215698478BA85F801AF8349E34356B60

Question 2:

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Can I follow up with a further question? You mentioned the volume of complaints that you've had in terms of the reporting numbers. It's 150 a week or something.

STEPHEN BEAMAN: It's 7,618, which is about 150 a week.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: I'd be interested to know—and I'm happy for you to take it on notice if

you don't know off the top of your head—have you seen any trends in that since the phone line was announced? Has there been increase over time? Is it relatively stable?

STEPHEN BEAMAN: I'd have to take that on notice. The phone line has been running for probably more than 30 years—the 131 555. We try to promote it any chance we can because it's a good phone number.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Yes. That's where the question was going to—whether that level of awareness is out there or whether it has been.

Answer 2:

Reported environmental incidents.

The EPA keeps track of environmental incidents reported by the community. The number of incidents reported may increase due to increased public awareness, effective education campaigns, and extreme events such as flooding or bushfires. In 2020-21, the EPA changed how we record incidents: similar and related reports from the community are now counted as one incident.

Year	Number of reported incidents
2018-19	8,298
2019-20	8,933
2020-21	8,586
2021-22	6,606
2022-23	5,608