

**Submission
No 1**

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF
GOLD, SILVER, LEAD AND ZINC MINING ON HUMAN
HEALTH, LAND, AIR AND WATER QUALITY IN NEW
SOUTH WALES**

Name: Malcolm and Prudence Sinclair

Date Received: 10 August 2023

Ms Cate Faehrmann
NSW Greens MP
8th August 2023

Dear Cate,

We were very pleased to see the announcement of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on public health, water quality and agriculture in NSW.

We own a mixed farming operation on the eastern side of the Bumbaldry/ Greenethorpe Road in Central West NSW. We are across the Tyagong Creek valley from the closed Broula King Gold Mine and mothballed ore processing facility.

We would like to highlight the key concerns in regards the approval process, and the environmental risk and damage from the Broula King gold mine in the Tyagong Creek valley.

We were heavily involved with other local landholders in highlighting the material risks/concerns about the reopening and management of the Broula King mine in 2003/04 undertaken by Resources Base Limited.

We were particularly frustrated by the approval process. The ignorance/indifference at the local level especially the Weddin Council members in making key decisions. The Weddin Council members at the time incorrectly assuming that the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was an independent assessment of the risks of the project to the local residents, the surrounding land, and adjacent waterways. Clearly, it should have been read as a pitch document produced by the mining company wishing to reopen the old mine. The misconception of the EIS needs to be highlighted as a flawed element of approving of mining at the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry.

In fact, at the Weddin Council meeting where we as local residents presented material concerns in 2003/04, we were assessed against a one-page summary of the two volume EIS. The one-page summary was of course produced by Resources Base Ltd not an independent body. In fact, the councillors making the call over the mines reopening had not even read the full EIS, some stating it was too long! They relied on a one-page summary from the company! How often has this happened or is continuing to happen in the approval process for new mines or opening up old mines in Central West NSW?

The undercapitalised listed operating company, in this case Resources Base Ltd, and the relatively small bond set by the Weddin Council/EPA to cover any environmental damage from the operation of the mine only added to our concerns. A major environmental incident could never have been properly managed given the resources available.

The Broula King Mine required a large tailings dam to facilitate the operation of its ore processing. The Tailings Dam is on the side of a steep south facing hill. From the dam's location the gullies run down to the Tyagong creek that flows through to Lake Cowal.

We requested that Weddin Council require Resources Base Ltd to install a poly lining at the bottom of the tailings dam as a minimum due to substantial evidence of clay lined tailings dams failing thus leaking or collapsing in Australia and overseas. This has resulted in pollution of local water ways and

surrounding land. The Weddin Council rejected our request. We are now aware that Resources Base Limited then chose the cheapest and inappropriate dam construction option in regards to the clay they used. It has since proven to be too porous a material to be effective in maintaining the integrity of the Tailings Dam that now contains heavy metals.

The tailings dam was required due to the cyanide heap leaching process to extract gold from the mined material. The residue of the process is a toxic cocktail of cyanide and heavy metals (cadmium, arsenic, lead etc) released as the rocks dissolve in the process of extracting the gold. The subsequent very dry years, and more recently very wet years have evaporated and refilled the dam creating pressure on the structural integrity of the tailings dam once again.

Post the closure of the mine and ore processing and sale to Sunshine Reclamation (post major EPA fines handed to Resources Base Ltd) there has been constant speculation about the closed processing plant being reopened to process trucked in ore. This would be ore from other old contaminated mine site's tailings dumps. In particular Sunshine Reclamation's interest in the highly toxic closed Sunny Corners mine site near Yetholm between Bathurst and Lithgow. The added load on the existing poorly constructed semi porous tailings dam is a recipe for a major pollution event and long-term damage of the permanent Tyagong creek.

If the mothballed ore processing facility is to be considered for reuse for further ore processing, then a new Environmental Impact Study must be required as a minimum for the approval process. This should cover a review of the entire site, and surrounding neighbours land and waterways. This is in light of past failures of the mine's revolving door management, to meet even what must be described as basic EPA standards.

Given the history of issues at the Broula King mine we would expect other local Tyagong Creek landholders to be putting in submissions to your inquiry.

We look forward to discussing the issues raised above and assisting with the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry in any way we can.

Regards

Malcolm and Prudence Sinclair