

Submission
No 17

**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**

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My name is Peter Roberts. I am a general practitioner who has been practising in Mudgee for the last 35 years. I wish to object to the Bowdens Project in Lue on numerous medical grounds. I have read the Environmental Risk Sciences Report into the health effects of this mine and their conclusions.

My main concern is the anxiety and social dislocation this project will and has caused to the people of Lue and surrounds. Over the years I have looked after patients from Wollar and Ulan who have been significantly impacted psychologically by the direct effects of mining. I have seen significant anxiety and depression manifest in these populations leading onto them leaving their communities and struggling with ongoing loss and helplessness. Wollar community particularly is unrecognisable to what it was when I came to the region. This anxiety and helplessness in the face of a relentless mining company I now see in the people I know from Lue and its surrounds. One mother from Lue recently voiced her despair regarding the threat of lead to her children's health and her inability to have her concerns heard. This psychological disturbance has not been addressed by the Environmental Risk Sciences Report. One of the concerns expressed by residents is noise disturbance. From my experience any level of noise disturbance is psychologically damaging when the source is related to an unwanted mining project.

Furthermore there is considerable concern about lead levels particularly in relation to young children and pregnant mothers. The World Health Organisation states that any lead level in the blood may be hazardous. Port Pirie although a smelter and not directly related to Bowdens is currently recording the highest levels of lead in children in decades. This is despite multiple reassurances from the industry and after spending \$291million to mitigate risk. It is no wonder there is a high level of concern regarding mining industry reassurances. A Macquarie University study stated that every rise of 10 usg/dl in the blood leads to a drop of 13 points in IQ. Even low levels of lead in children's blood can lead onto reduced growth, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. The parents of children in the Lue region will be understandably extremely anxious despite any reassurances from the mining industry.

They will be more anxious if they read the Australian Financial Review on 13/2/2022. There is a highly publicised case that a baby suffered brain damage as a result of lead emissions from Glencore's Mount Isa smelter. She repeatedly had blood levels above National Health standards. Glencore argued that her blood levels were the result of, "... naturally occurring lead caused by the processes of weathering and leaching of rocks in the area." Given Glencore's stance I would recommend all children, pregnant mothers and concerned adults in the area have their baseline lead level checked before mining starts and rechecked regularly. A blood test for a young child is a very daunting and traumatic experience. It will also place an extra burden on the already stretched Mudgee medical system.

Further worrying evidence concerning lead as a neurotoxin in people over 65 was provided by Dr Bruce Brew Professor of Medicine [neurology] at University of New South Wales. He states citing compelling evidence that "chronic exposure to even mildly raised lead concentrations can accelerate Alzheimer's disease". He also points out that his modelling reveals potentially very significant elevations of lead levels in drinking water for people living in the vicin

Bowdens has stated that it will create 320 direct construction jobs and 228 ongoing operational jobs. We now have a critical shortage of doctors in Mudgee with the prospect of 3-4 senior doctors retiring in the next few years. I can see nothing in Bowden's plan to address this issue. With the multiple solar and wind farms and grid construction projects about to happen in our district I see a critical shortage of doctors and nurses in the near future which is being totally ignored.

Having seen the social and psychological devastation to rural towns such as Wollar from the mining industry I do not want to see this happen to the people of Lue. My opposition to this project is holistic and looks at the real threats to the psychological and physical wellbeing of a thriving rural village and surrounds. It also relates to the critical medical workforce problems in the region and no attempts by Bowdens to mitigate against the effect of their new large permanent workforce.

Alison Ziller in her Review of social impacts of Bowdens proposed silver mine report has encapsulated the source of Lue residents unresolved concerns in her summary page.

These are

- 1) Having to choose between tolerating unmitigated noise and dust and living in a fully closed air-conditioned dwelling
- 2) Living with ongoing risks to health evident in the fact of regular testing for lead in soil and water
- 3) Anxiety due to the risks of health particularly affecting young people potentially realising that adverse health impacts have occurred
- 4) Loss of many amenities a rural way of life including home grown food, open windows, windows, line clothes drying
- 5) Loss of sense of place and visual amenity
- 6) Anxiety due to loss of property values and inability to realise the previous capital value of homes and property because of the proximity of the mine
- 7) Loss of permanent residents despite the fall in property values
- 8) Reduction in neighbourly cooperation and volunteering due to loss of permanent residents
- 9) Living with one or more of the following realisations,
Although the mine is proposed to operate for 15 years, the owner may apply to extend this ;
There appears to be no mechanism to ensure the residential areas of Lue are fully protected from lead particles ;

There appears to be no effective mechanism to ensure that once extraction ceases the pit is fully rehabilitated ;

There appears to be no means of ensuring that after the proposed 15 years of operation, the village will be a safe place for people and especially young people to live .

Reference: Wasserman G.A. et al Child Neuropsychology 2003.