

Submission  
No 26

**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:** Mr Michael Boller

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## **The current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales.**

I live in very close proximity to the project, on Powells Road. I am making this submission to express my concern about the planned Bowdens project which poses unacceptable risks to public health, groundwater, flora and fauna, including Koalas and existing employment in agriculture and tourism.

I live on a farm within 2.5km of the planned mine site. We rely on rainwater tanks for drinking water, and we draw from Reedy Creek and Hawkins Creek for farming purposes. The current modelling predicts that our drinking water and vegetable garden will be compromised by airborne lead, for which there are no safe levels of exposure.

Figure 14, Bowdens Response (re) Human Health, Assessment p.20, shows that every one of 120 residences in and around Lue has elevated Risk Indexes for lead exposure. That Risk Index is substantially higher again at 7 private residences on both Powells and Pyangle roads.

I will address Term of Reference 1 (e) in my submission. This section relates to Regulatory frameworks.

### **Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for Public Exhibition.**

Proponents of mining projects engage private consultants to prepare an EIS on their behalf.

\*The EIS is not required by legislation to cover all adverse aspects of the project. The scope is determined by the consulting company, with no regulatory oversight or insistence on coverage of critical elements.

\*The EIS is prepared by a commercial entity with a very strong vested interest in project approval. A company producing Statements adverse to proponents would be quickly out of business.

\*Such an EIS is not independent, it is not at arms length from the proponent and it minimises risks and threats to communities living near to the project.

This EIS relies very heavily on modelling and averaging, particularly relating to water availability and the effects on Lawson Creek.

A much fairer legislated framework would see EIS consultants completely removed from proponent influence by being paid from a central fund into which all proponents of projects paid a predetermined deposit.

## **The Role of the Department of Planning and Environment.**

The DPE is a taxpayer funded arm of the State Government. While the role of the Department and its officers ought to be to treat both the proponent and the adversely impacted community fairly and equitably, the very strong perception in this community is that the DPE has openly supported and facilitated the proponent while often ignoring or minimising submissions, reports and health concerns from community members. A DPE employee stated in a public forum that his role “was to facilitate the approval of the project”.

There is no Minister for Looking After the Interests of Displaced or Damaged Community members for this and any other DPE supported project. This must be addressed from a legislative viewpoint. Communities feel powerless, unsupported and left to fend for themselves, often incurring very considerable financial and health costs.

## **The Role of the Independant Planning Commission.**

The IPC is legislated as the final arbiter of the merits and threats of the Bowdens Project. Despite overwhelming community opposition and substantial expert evidence presented in the 3 day forum, the IPC approved this project. This decision not only raised serious doubts about the fairness of the process, it also extinguished the rights of the community to pursue Merit Appeals through legal channels. This outcome is the same for many, many projects throughout NSW and raises very serious questions about silencing and overriding very serious adverse issues raised by affected communities.

## **Adverse Effects of Development Approvals.**

The DPE states that it has no obligation to consider the adverse effects of project approval on –

- Property values
- Surrounding businesses.

Residences which lie outside the completely arbitrary and inadequate “buffer zone” decided upon by the proponent are left with reduced property values, often trapped in homes they can only sell at significantly reduced prices.

Agricultural and tourism enterprises close to the project are given no consideration. How can existing jobs be threatened or lost by the promise of very short term mining jobs?

Thank you for considering my submission. I would be prepared to address any further Enquiry in person if invited.