

Submission  
No 51

**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:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 3 September 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

My family and myself are landholders located at Kings Plains within the impacted dwelling area of the (now approved) McPhillamies Gold mine. We have numerous issues regarding the approvals process for the mine, and the experience has left myself and my family with serious doubts that the proper due diligence has taken place to prevent significant impacts to our quality of life.

Our first concern is, of course, for our health. Previously, given the extent of mining within our area, we believed that mining and its relationship with both agriculture and communities had been effectively managed by the proper authorities. However, recent events at the Cadia Valley mine (Newcrest) have destroyed our faith in agencies like the EPA to rapidly respond to breaches of environmental law until at least some damage has been done. This has happened numerous times on just this one site, examples being both the recent unrestricted dust emissions and tailings dam wall failure. The former of this resulted in populations downwind of the facility being exposed to hazardous levels of heavy metals, and action was only taken after reportedly over 600 complaints were made. Persons impacted in the area were also forced to take it upon themselves to get their blood tested for exposure to chemicals and the mentioned heavy metals. Given this failure to comply with dust emissions levels and the EPA's sluggish response, we find it absurd that the IPC accepted Regis Resources assurances that we will be unaffected by dust, despite both our proximity and aspect from the site being much closer than even the people affected by Cadia (<1km vs in some cases up to 8km away). We believe that the process of mine approval should require at the bare minimum constant monitoring of hazardous emissions from sites, for dust and other contaminants and should not rely on self-reporting of companies with a vested interest.

Another facet of mine approval we believe is grossly mismanaged is the approval of mines that present a significant danger to water resources. Two examples are provided in our general area, including the Sunny Coner gold mine (closed over 100 years ago), and the McPhillamies development. The Sunny Corner mine, while closed for some time, was recently found to be leeching a toxic cocktail of chemicals to this day, including cadmium, copper, gold, arsenic, and lead. This shows that even after a mine has been shuttered, there appears to be very little management of the site for residual contamination. How can we expect the EPA and other agencies, ever slow in their response, to provide adequate monitoring for new mining developments if we have old sites like this still causing harm after well over a century. This is further alarming when you consider that the IPC has approved the construction of a large tailings dam (McPhillamies) over the headwaters and tributaries of the Belubula River, which feeds into the Lachlan River and from there into the Murray Darling basin. This is despite the fact that a mine within 50kms of the site (Cadia) has experienced a catastrophic tailings dam breach within the last 5 years. While we remain sure that engineer reports and other assurances have been given as to the strength and longevity of the wall, it is seen in the last two examples that no construction is indestructible and nor is its continued security after the end of life of the mine assured. We believe this shows that organizations such as the IPC and EPA may thrive when considering the micro-factors when approving a development, but they seem to fail when

considering the macro. Any failure of this example will prove catastrophic, not just for the local area but to the entire Murray-Darling basin south of the central west. It is bordering madness that such a precarious project has been approved by the IPC when the consequences are as extreme as they are. Furthering this, there has been no condition imposed on Regis Resources that they monitor surrounding properties for loss of water resources, even when they expect to disrupt aquifers with a large and extremely deep open cut pit. This further shows that mines are being approved without

proper consideration of the surrounding area and impacted landowners.

We believe the current regulatory environment concerning mining activity is deeply flawed and requires immediate review. In just the few examples provided above it is clearly seen that currently, the procedures used to consider both the merits and drawbacks of proposed projects are lacking. They do not provide thorough consideration of impacts to effected people in close proximity, impartial monitoring of approved developments, or any particular level of transparency. Current penalties for breaching environmental law are also laughably insufficient (for example, Newcrest, the multi-billion dollar company and operator of Cadia Valley, received only a \$15,000 fine after exceeding dust emissions for the first time). After being closely involved with the approvals process for McPhillamies we feel that we were often ignored or given false or misleading information. The IPC community meeting raised many issues that we consider to have been blatantly ignored or were simply explained away with the most tenuous justification. Over all, the process seems heavily weighted towards expediting the approval of these developments much to the detriment of communities, agriculture, and the environment.

Thankyou for your consideration.