

**Submission
No 67**

**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: Dr ANN FINEGAN

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Dear Commissioners,

I am very grateful for this opportunity to respond to your Enquiry into the Current & Potential Impacts of Gold, Silver, Lead and Zinc Mining on Human Health.

I have been a resident of Kandos, NSW, since 2010, and have been following the media reports on the dangerous and unacceptable levels of toxic dust released by the Cadia gold mine near Bathurst.

The ABC and other television reports widely televised the serious nature of this situation, as did an article in The Guardian, 2 August 2023.

All reports highlighted the serious shortcomings in regulatory safeguards, in particular with respect to human health. Television footage of clouds of toxic dust filling the valley was apparent to the naked eye and it was alarming to learn that the mine, effectively self-regulating, had been inadequately monitored – indeed permitted to self-monitor.

The details of the levels of substances toxic to human health were frightening – especially the high levels of contaminants found in the tank water on which residents of the valley depend. Please see below in link to this article for the list of medical conditions now linked to the mine.

The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/03/cadia-goldmine-dust-pollution-regulations-nsw-epa>

As a nation I am of the opinion that we should look carefully to the failings of this example and take steps to ensure that similar situations do not evolve in the mining of metals in the Central West and other regions.

I was therefore appalled to see that the proposal of Bowdens Silver Mine Pty Ltd for a silver mine at Lue, NSW, had been given approval on 3 April, 2023, with many major technical issues dealing with the mine left pending, to be resolved post hoc.

How can approval be granted without an adequate Management Plan yet created? Given the scale and significance of the project surely an adequate Management Plan should have been a major priority - in particular in respect of the risk to human and agricultural health from lack of regulation of water and dust management.

As is well known, an open cut silver mine would generate clouds of toxic lead dust. This is of major concern for human and agricultural health (biomagnification and bioaccumulation effects on land, soil, livestock and crops).

Insufficient detail was provided in the Bowdens submission as to how dust would be managed. Their submission refers only to the recycling of wastewater through their holding ponds. Indeed, for reasons of lack of adequate water, several mining companies have abandoned plans to mine the area. For this reason alone, Bowdens plan to rely only on rainwater falling directly onto their holdings should be closely scrutinized. Without sufficient water for dampening down dust how can the company protect human and agricultural health?

Furthermore, in respect of aquifers and underground water flows, the fact that the proposed mine sits over a geological fault line was not included in the geological reports on the proposed mine area. This is a serious omission with potential impacts on regional aquifers, and, in turn, on human and agricultural health. Mudgee currently relies on aquifers for its water supply.

In short, I am requesting the commission support the legislation of much stricter regulatory controls on the mining industry on matters of human and agricultural health, with mining projects not accepted for approval until such a set of better regulations are met.

I urge the passing of new legislation such that all monitoring for human and agricultural health would be conducted by government officials, independent of the mines, and, furthermore, that all future mining submissions provide detailed Management Plans.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to this enquiry.

Best Regards,

Dr Ann Finegan