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

Organisation: Regis Resources

Date Received: 4 September 2023



To: NSW Parliament Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health

Re: 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

Submitted: 4th September 2023

1. Executive summary

Regis Resources Ltd (Regis) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee regarding this Inquiry and the McPhillamys Gold Project (McPhillamys).

Regis is one of Australia's top five ASX-listed gold producers with interests in two producing assets in Western Australia. Regis has owned McPhillamys in Central Western NSW for over 10 years and it is integral to Regis' future development plans.

Since Regis purchased McPhillamys, over \$160M has been invested in project exploration, assessment and approvals. The project received NSW and Australian Government approvals in the first half of 2023 and the Company has a target to commence construction in 2024.

Since acquiring McPhillamys, and in particular during the four-and-a-half years of planning assessment, Regis has worked closely with the local community. This has included detailed communication about how potential environmental and health impacts will be monitored and managed by the company and regulated by the NSW Government.

Regis' overarching principle for managing environmental and social impacts is to prevent, minimise or manage at source. This is reflected in the extensive environmental and social impact assessment work undertaken during the NSW Government's thorough and rigorous independent assessment and approvals process.

Independent research, and public submissions to the Independent Planning Commission (IPC), shows that the majority of people in the Blayney LGA support the development of McPhillamys. It will offer communities in the Blayney region significant opportunities and benefits including 260 direct jobs, supply of goods and services to the mine and community investment.

Regis has a strong history of working closely with the Blayney community and the NSW Government bodies involved in the assessment, approval and regulation processes. We remain committed to working with these stakeholders to operate to the standards that build and maintain social licence to operate in NSW.



2. Project overview

The 100% Regis-owned McPhillamys Gold Project is one of Australia's larger undeveloped openpittable gold resources. It is located approximately 250 kilometres west of Sydney in the established mining region of Central Western NSW, 8km from Blayney (Figure 1).

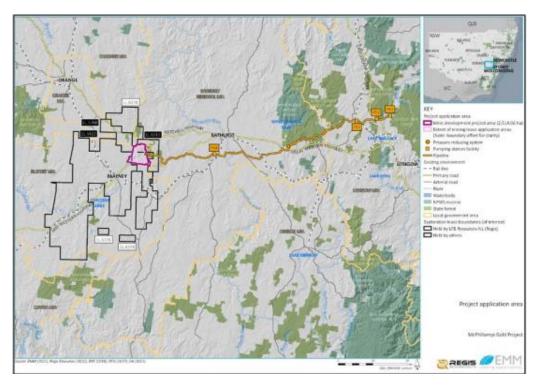


Figure 1: McPhillamys Gold Project – regional context1

Since Regis purchased McPhillamys in 2012, the company has invested over \$160M in the exploration, assessment and approvals that have informed the planning assessment process.

Over a mine life of approximately 15 years (2 years construction, 10-11 years operations and 2-3 years rehabilitation) an ore reserve of 60.8 million tonnes at 1.04g/t containing 2.02 million ounces of gold will be mined and processed.

Unused, stock-quality water from Lithgow coal mines and the Mt Piper power plant will be supplied to the mine site via a 90km pipeline, meaning that local water is not being sourced for ore processing. After mine closure, the pipeline infrastructure could make an important contribution to water security infrastructure for Central West NSW.

Overall, McPhillamys will increase employment, training, and community investment in Blayney LGA and the region. During construction, the workforce will peak at 600 before settling to an operating workforce of approximately 260.

Blayney Shire LGA will benefit from a substantial increase in rates paid as well as the Voluntary Planning Agreement which will see a financial contribution of 1% of the final capital investment.

During operation, McPhillamys will generate \$492M in annual direct and indirect regional output or business turnover, \$272M in annual direct and indirect regional value-add, \$67M in annual direct and indirect household income.

The NSW and Australian governments will benefit from royalties and various taxes.²



Research carried out by ISO-accredited SEC Newgate late in 2022 showed strong community support for the project with over 70% of people surveyed in the Blayney LGA supporting McPhillamys. The remainder were neutral (15%) and a small number negative (15%). This is reinforced by the fact that the majority of submissions to the IPC were from the local area and were positive.³

McPhillamys received NSW Planning Approval in March 2023 (with 162 development consent conditions) and Australian Government approval in May 2023 (with 31 development consent conditions).

The development consent conditions are being incorporated into the final business case which will inform the Final Investment Decision (FID) for the project, expected to be made in 2024.

3. Assessment and approval process overview

Achieving approval for a mining project under the NSW planning assessment and approval process is an extensive undertaking. After completing a thorough and rigorous four-and-a-half-year consultation and assessment process the IPC approved the McPhillamys Gold Project in March 2023.

Table 1 (below) gives a brief outline of key milestones in the assessment process and the extensive supporting documentation required.

Date	Process
Dec 2018	Environmental Assessment Requirements (EARs4) issued by the (now) NSW Department of Planning and
	Environment (DPE).
	The Community Consultative Committee was formed and has met at least quarterly since then.
Aug 2019	The 33-volume, 6,300 page Environmental Impact Statement 2019 (EIS) gave detailed responses to each
	Environmental Assessment Requirement. Each response was based on multiple rounds of design, assessment and refinement. ⁵
Sept 2020	The eight-volume, 900-page Submissions Report addressed issues raised in the 6716 stakeholder submissions
	sent to DPE during the EIS exhibition period.
Sept 2020	Amendment Report 1 – Improvements to site access and footprint, water management and pipeline.
June 2022	Amendment Report 2 – Improvements to site water management.
Oct 2022	Amendment Report 3 – Changes to pipeline alignment and the application area.
Nov 2022	The DPE State Significant Development Report stated thatthe benefits of the project outweigh the residual
	costs and that the project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the strict conditions of consent. ⁷
March 2023	The IPC determined that McPhillamys wasconsistent with the objects of the Environmental Planning and
	Assessment Act 1979 and would achieve an appropriate balance between relevant environmental, economic
	and social considerations (and) that, on balance, the Application is in the public interest. ⁸ The Development
	Consent included 162 conditions. ⁹
May 2023	EPBC approval included 31 conditions.

Table 1: Key approval milestones

Under the development consent conditions, eighteen management plans must be prepared. They include plans covering environmental management, social impacts, air quality and greenhouse gases, water, noise and blast, biodiversity, heritage, traffic management, hazardous materials, emergencies, bushfires and rehabilitation.

The management plans detail how compliance will be achieved and go through a process of stakeholder consultation (DPE, other government agencies and the Community Consultative Committee when required), before being submitted to DPE for approval. Management plans must be approved before any work may start, ensuring immediate compliance.



Stakeholders can be confident that regular NSW Government audits and reviews of the management plans will ensure they are achieving their objectives and comply with relevant standards and legislation, for the life of the mine.

4. Health of residents and workers

The EIS included detailed expert assessments relating to health¹⁰ (air quality¹¹, noise and vibration¹², hazardous materials¹⁴, lighting¹⁶) which concluded that potential health impacts could be prevented, minimised or managed during construction and operations.

The *Submissions Report* tabulated all concerns submitted by government agencies and the community during the EIS exhibition process with references to where they had been addressed.¹⁸ It directed respondents to information answering their questions about air quality¹⁹, noise and vibration²⁰ and hazardous materials ²¹ ²² in response to submissions.

An independently-prepared *Health Impact Assessment*²³ (HIA) reiterated that, 'Based on the available information, and with consideration of the uncertainties identified, no health risk issues of concern have been identified for the off-site community'.²⁴ ²⁵

The subsequent *Amendment Report (2020)* further refined the management of air quality²⁶, noise and vibration.^{27 28} Impacts remained consistent with the HIA and were of no or negligible concern. ²⁹

The development consent conditions define compliance requirements for air quality³⁰, hazardous materials³¹ and light emissions.³² Compliance with those conditions is covered in the associated management plans.

5. Water

McPhillamys has two characteristics that inherently minimise impacts on local water. Firstly, it is designed to be a nil-discharge site.³³ Secondly, stock-quality water from Lithgow coal mines and the Mt Piper power plant will be used for processing.

Detailed expert assessments relating to water³⁴ were presented as part of the EIS (surface water³⁵ ³⁶, ground water³⁸ ³⁹ ⁴⁰ and aquatic biodiversity⁴¹ ⁴²), the *Submissions Report* and three subsequent amendment reports. All assessments included baseline groundwater monitoring and surface water monitoring data collected since 2014 from monitoring points on and around the site.

In response to government agencies' and community comments on the EIS, the *Submissions Report* clarified assessments on all three areas⁴³ ⁴⁴ which, overall, reinforced that the project, '...would ...have a minimal impact on water resources'.⁴⁵

The Submissions Report included a Surface Water-Groundwater Interaction Assessment⁴⁶ that concluded that downstream users will still have plenty of access to river water and that groundwater-feeding springs and seeps would continue to move underground and discharge downstream.⁴⁷

The three Amendment Reports further refined ways impacts on water could be minimised (water management⁴⁸ ⁴⁹, impacts on water resources⁵⁰, aquatic ecology⁵¹ ⁵², surface water⁵³ ⁵⁴, groundwater⁵⁵), again concluding that the potential for the project to have adverse health impacts on water was negligible.⁵⁶



The development consent conditions set extensive and detailed compliance requirements for water - water supply⁵⁷, compensatory water⁵⁸, water discharges⁵⁹, water management performance measures⁶⁰ and water offsets.⁶¹ A *Water Management Plan*⁶² will be developed and will cover site water balance, erosion and sediment control, surface water, groundwater and the tailings storage facility liner.

Water for towns near McPhillamys (Blayney and Millthorpe) comes from Lake Rowlands, which is in a different water source to McPhillamys.

While there is no evidence that nearby drinking water tanks will be affected, some Kings Plains property owners have included installation of first flush systems on rainwater tanks in their Landowner Mitigation and Compensation Agreements with Regis.

6. Biodiversity – land, plants and animals

Detailed expert assessments relating to biodiversity⁶³ 64 65 66 67 68 were presented as part of the EIS. They showed impacts could be prevented, minimised or managed during construction and operations.

In response to government agencies' and community comments on the EIS, the *Submissions Report* included additional work done on impacts on land (final landform design⁶⁹, final landform and void⁷⁰, and post-mine land use^{71 72}) and impacts on aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity.⁷³ Amendment Reports gave further refinements to the management of terrestrial biodiversity^{74 75} and aquatic ecology.⁷⁶

The development consent conditions define compliance requirements for biodiversity including biodiversity and aquatic offsets⁷⁷, and a biodiversity management plan.⁷⁸

7. Rehabilitation

Detailed expert assessments relating to progressive rehabilitation were presented as part of the EIS. The rehabilitation study⁷⁹ showed that, apart from the 70ha⁸⁰ pit void, the entire site can be successfully rehabilitated to either agricultural grazing land or revegetated land.

In response to government agencies' and community comments on the EIS, the *Submissions Report* reiterated that progressive rehabilitation could be successfully completed.⁸¹ *Amendment Report 1* further refined the progressive rehabilitation and landscape management process.⁸²

The development consent conditions require⁸³ land to be restored to a state which is safe, stable and non-polluting and includes consideration of post-mining land uses. The conditions require preparation, approval and ongoing review of management plans, including a *Rehabilitation Strategy*⁸⁴ and a *Landscaping Strategy*.⁸⁵ The *Development Consent* remains in force until all rehabilitation has been completed to the required standard.⁸⁶

The assessment process requires applicants to show that their mines are 'opening to close'.

The people of NSW can be confident that, under requirements of the *Mining Regulation NSW 2016*, multiple regulatory requirements ensure that McPhillamys will be rehabilitated to the required standard.

Regulatory requirements include submission of a rehabilitation management strategy and an annual rehabilitation report including a rolling three-year forward program of rehabilitation works. A



substantial security bond is paid at the beginning of operations, recalculated over the life of the mine and refunded only when rehabilitation is completed to the required standard.

8. Regulatory requirements

During construction and operation, McPhillamys must comply with extensive NSW and Commonwealth Acts, regulations and policies. The legislation applies to health and safety, environment and biodiversity, water, heritage, planning and approvals, mine licencing, mine operations, roads, pipelines, dams, forestry and Crown Lands.⁸⁷

The Acts, regulations and policies are administered by numerous NSW Government departments including the DPE, the Environment Protection Authority, DPE Water, Crown Lands, the Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries, Heritage NSW and Transport for NSW.

The detail and depth of Regis' work on understanding and managing potential impacts is reflected in over 10,000 pages of expert commentary, modelling and analysis presented during the assessment process. This includes responses to over 670 stakeholder comments during the EIS exhibition process alone.⁸⁸

Regis believes that the detailed scientific evidence required during the assessment process, combined with the obligation to respond to stakeholder comments, is best-practice project assessment.

Coupled with strict development consent conditions, the current regulatory framework in NSW is more than sufficient to ensure a safe and compliant mining industry.

9. Conclusion

McPhillamys will deliver extensive economic benefits at a local, state and national level and the Blayney community supports the project. The combination of extensive expert studies, the long and thorough assessment process and development consent conditions show that potential impacts from McPhillamys can be prevented, mitigated or managed.



Endnotes:

¹ McPhillamys Gold Project (SSD 9505) Assessment Report, NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), November 2022, pg. 1, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120221117T040802.543%20GMT

² McPhillamys Gold Project SSD 9505 – Response to additional material, Regis Resources March 2022, pg. 48, https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/projects/2022/11/mcphillamys-gold-project/email-and-postal-public-submissions/applicant-submission/230301in-applicant-response-to-additional-material--mcphillamys-gold-project-redacted.pdf

³ IPC Statement of Reasons for Decision, Independent Planning Commission, March 2023 pp. 16-17, https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/projects/2022/11/mcphillamys-gold-project/determination/230330-mcphillamys-gold-project--statement-of-reasons-for-decision.pdf

⁴ Environmental Assessment Requirements, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2018, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T014518.693%20GMT

⁵ EIS Main Report, Regis Resources, 2019, pg. ES.6,

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⁶ McPhillamys Gold Project Submissions Report 2020, LFB Resources, pg. 9 <u>https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120200908T224211.249%20GMT</u>

⁷ DPE, November 2022, op. cit., pg. ix https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/projects/2022/11/mcphillamys-gold-project/referral-from-dpe/mcphillamys-gold-project--assessment-report.pdf

⁸ IPC, op. cit., pg. I

⁹ Development Consent, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120230403T021314.199%20GMT

¹⁰ EIS Appendix T: Mine development social impact assessment, Regis Resources 2019, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T002000.709%20GMT

¹¹ EIS Appendix M: Mine development air quality and greenhouse gas assessment, Regis Resources 2019, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T001538.720%20GMT

EIS Appendix L: Mine development noise and vibration assessment, Regis Resources 2019, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T001414.085%20GMT

¹³ EIS Appendix AA: Pipeline development noise and vibration assessment, Regis Resources 2019, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T002449.644%20GMT

¹⁴ EIS Main Report, op. cit. pp., 479-486

¹⁵ EIS Appendix CC – Cyanide utilization, Regis Resources 2019,

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 16 EIS Main Report, op. cit., pp 509-510

 17 EIS Appendix S: Mine development visual impact assessment, Regis Resources 2019,

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¹⁸ Submissions Report, Regis Resources 2020, pg. 15,

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¹⁹ ibid., pp. 238-264

²⁰ ibid., pp 271-276

²¹ ibid., pp 334-337

²² Submissions Report Appendix H: Gold processing options, Regis Resources 2020, https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mcphillamys-gold-project

²³ ibid., pg. 310

²⁴ Submissions Report Appendix E: Health Impact Assessment, Regis Resources 2020, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120200908T224210.061%20GMT

²⁵ ibid., pp 61-62

²⁶ Amendment Report Appendix L: Revised air quality and greenhouse gas assessment, Regis Resources 2020, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120200908T223240.347%20GMT



²⁷ Main Amendment Report, 6.5 Noise and vibration, Regis Resources 2020, pp 155-186,

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²⁹ Amendment Report, Appendix S: Social Impact Assessment Addendum, Regis Resources 2020, op.cit., pg. 59

³⁰ Development Consent, conditions B29-B37, pp. 13-15,

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³¹ ibid., conditions B88-B91, pg. 27

32 ibid., conditions B77-B78, pg. 25

33 EIS Main Report, op. cit., pg. 20

³⁴ EIS Appendix L: Mine development noise and vibration assessment, Regis Resources 2020,

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35 EIS Main Report, op. cit., pp. 228-308

³⁶ EIS Appendix J: Mine development surface water assessment, Regis Resources 2019,

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m 37}$ EIS Appendix X: Pipeline development water assessment, Regis Resources 2019,

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³⁸ EIS Main Report: Section 9: Water Resources, op. cit., pp.228-308

³⁹ Appendix K: Mine development ground water assessment, Regis Resources 2019,

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⁴⁰ EIS Appendix X, op.cit.

⁴¹ EIS Main Report: Section 14: Aquatic Ecology, op.cit., pp. 426-434

⁴² EIS Appendix O: Mine development aquatic ecology assessment, Regis Resources 2019,

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⁴³ Submissions Report, op.cit., pp 238-264

⁴⁴ ibid., pg. 298

⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 238

⁴⁶ Submissions Report Appendix C: Surface Water-Groundwater Interaction Assessment

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⁴⁷ ibid, pp 64-65

⁴⁸ Amendment Report 2020, op. cit., pp 53-58

⁴⁹ Amendment Report, Regis Resources, May 2022, pp. 6-9

⁵⁰ Amendment Report 2020, op. cit., pp 111-154

⁵¹ ibid., pp. 231-240

⁵² Amendment Report 2020, Appendix N: Aquatic Ecology, op. cit.

⁵³ Amendment Report 2020, Appendix G: Surface Water, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Amendment Report 2022, op. cit., pp. 25-26,

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⁵⁵ Amendment Report 2020, Appendix H: Groundwater,

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⁵⁶ Amendment Report 2020, Appendix S: Social Impact Assessment Addendum, Table 10, op. cit., pg. 59

⁵⁷ Development Consent, conditions B39-B41, op. cit., pg. 15

⁵⁸ ibid, conditions B42-B48, pp. 15-16

⁵⁹ ibid, condition B49, pg. 16

⁶⁰ ibid, condition B50, pp. 16-17

⁶¹ ibid, conditions B51-B52, pg. 17

⁶² ibid, condition B53-55, pp. 17-19



⁶³ EIS Appendix G: Mine development geochemical characterisation, Regis Resources 2019,

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⁶⁴ EIS Appendix H: Mine development land capability and soil assessment, Regis Resources 2019, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T001017.775%20GMT

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⁶⁶ EIS Appendix W: Pipeline development soil and land resources supplementary information, Regis Resources 2019, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120190830T002203.428%20GMT

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⁶⁸ EIS Appendix O: Mine development aquatic ecology assessment, op.cit.

⁶⁹ Submissions Report op.cit., pp. 157-165

⁷⁰ ibid, pp. 319-320

⁷¹ ibid., pp. 166-168

⁷² Ibid., pg. 283

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 304-312

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 201-230

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 201-230

⁷⁶ Amendment Report 2022, op.cit., pg. 21

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⁷⁹ EIS Appendix U: Rehabilitation,

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⁸² Amendment Report, Appendix T: Rehabilitation and Landscape Management Strategy Addendum, Regis Resources 2022, https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9505%2120200908T223246.992%20GMT

⁸³ Development Consent, conditions B95-B100, op. cit., pp 28-30

⁸⁴ Development Consent, op. cit., pg. 48

⁸⁵ ibid., condition B77(e), pp. 28-30

⁸⁶ Ibid., condition A11, pg. 7

 87 EIS Main Report Chapter 3: Legislation and policy, op. cit. pp. 97-132

⁸⁸ Submissions Report, op. cit. pp. 9-11