

Supplementary
Submission
No 64a

**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: Rylstone District Environment Society

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**Rylstone District
Environment Society**
www.envirorylstone.org.au

The Director
Portfolio Committee No.2 - Health
Parliament House
Maquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Submission - Parliamentary Inquiry

Current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales

3 September 2023

Dear Committee,

This document references potential lead dust pollution from the Bowdens silver, lead and zinc mine at Lue which was recently granted provisional approval by the IPC.

With both online submissions to the IPC and during the IPC's Public Hearing sessions held in February of this year, the Rylstone District Environment Society lodged objections to the Bowdens proposed open-cut silver, lead and zinc mine in the Lawson Creek Valley.

It is certainly worth noting that of the 80 speakers over the 3 days of public hearings approximately 80% opposed the mine. Online submissions to the IPC were also in the majority against. These figures would indicate there is definitely an issue with due process outcomes.

As has been highlighted by many in response to Bowdens Environmental Impact Statement and the Public Submissions and Public Hearing processes, less than 1 percent of the ore to be processed will contain silver. Bowdens own tonnage projected ore volumes for the life of the project are: Lead-95,000t , Zinc-130,000, and Silver-1,180t.

Given the legacy of heavy metals mining both in Australia and internationally, the potential level of lead dust along with other real risks such as Acid Mine Drainage that could result is unacceptable. Bowdens intend to create three open cut pits across 52 hectares. The village of Lue is just 2km from the center of the proposed main pit, and the communities of Mudgee and Rylstone are each around 25km away. With the many agricultural properties and other diverse businesses and communities, including tourism, throughout the surrounding region, we consider that this is an entirely inappropriate location for such a project.

Well before being granted provisional approval Bowdens had identified dust as being the primary pollutant of the proposed mine (Bowdens Silver 2020) and, regarding potential lead dust - in their '**Statement of Reasons for Decision**' of approval (SSD-5765, p15-para 69) the IPC indicates that the applicant themselves (Bowdens) identified that the key exposure pathways for the population in the project area are ***"acute and chronic inhalation exposure to metals in air, and exposure to metals deposited into soil and surfaces that could result in intake via ingestion and dermal contact with soils and/or water in rainwater tanks and ingestion through homegrown produce"*** (AR para 220).

As the science tells us, there is no safe level of lead exposure for anyone and the risk of lead poisoning is highest for unborn babies, infants and children (healthdirect.gov.au). The grossly inadequate collective assessments by Bowdens, the DPE and the IPC of the impacts of lead dust on the surrounding region, including failing to account for strong winds, lack of an appropriate water source for damping down purposes, the occurrence of drought, floods, etc, indicate that the long-term impacts of lead dust on community health have not been adequately considered.

As conditions of approval, the plethora of mitigating measures proposed to minimise any potential impacts are unclear and effectively are not applicable until after the damage has been done.

Given that Bowdens have also recently been granted exploration licenses for 'metallic minerals' on 2 new tenement areas, one closer to Mudgee and the other closer to Rylstone, and given that their parent company Silver Mines Ltd hold mining tenements covering 435,905 acres stretching from north of Gulgong to Kandos, the threat to both the environment and the health of surrounding communities on a much larger scale is becoming much more apparent.

The recent IPC approvals for the Lue Lead Mine and the McPhillamys Gold mine near Blayney, along with the latest news and associated images regarding the vast amount of airborne heavy metals dust, including lead, nickel and selenium, emitted by the Cadia Gold mine near Orange, have helped encourage this very timely and important Parliamentary Inquiry to help inform the future of the so called '**Critical Minerals Hub**' in Central West NSW.

As proud defenders of our local environment, the **Rylstone District Environment Society** considers that the present regulatory framework for heavy metals and critical minerals mining is not fit for purpose and we warmly welcome this '**Inquiry into current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality of NSW**'.

Yours Sincerely,
Terry Burrows

On behalf of Rylstone District Environment Society