

**Submission
No 81**

**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: Aurelia Metals

Date Received: 5 September 2023

To:
Dr Amanda Cohn MLC
Chair – Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health
NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

5 September 2023

Via email

Dear Dr Cohn,

Submission to the Portfolio Committee No. 2 Health regarding the 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

Aurelia Metals Ltd (**'Aurelia'**) welcomes the invitation to make this submission to the Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health (the **'Committee'**) regarding the 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 (the **'Inquiry'**).

Aurelia operates the Peak Mine and the Dargues Mine in far west NSW and the Tablelands respectively. These underground mines produce gold and base metals, including copper and zinc – both are contained in the NSW Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy. The Hera mining operation, also located in the Cobar Basin, has permanently ceased operations and the surface facilities have been placed into care and maintenance.

Aurelia's submission provides a mine operator's perspective of the topics included in the Committee's terms of reference, along with examples of contemporary management of critical metals mines to :

- Reduce the potential impacts to human health, land, air and water quality,
- Our contributions to the local region, and
- How we operate responsibly in our local regions

I have recently joined Aurelia as the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director. With 27 years' experience in major mining houses, the work completed within Aurelia to manage any risks associated with the potential impacts of mining gold and base metals are very well controlled from an industry benchmark point of view

Managing Environmental and Health Risks

Compliance : Aurelia has a strong track record of compliance in what is a large and highly complex operational and regulatory environment. The modern regulatory framework for mining in NSW is strong, with multiple government agencies and independent experts engaged throughout the assessment of proposed new mines, as well as independent regulators such as the Environmental Protection Authority, Resources Regulator and Natural Resources Access Regulator monitoring ongoing compliance.

Consultation : Aurelia is committed to maintaining a deep connection with the communities where we operate, including First Nations People. Therefore, Aurelia respects that communities have a right to engage in the assessment process to ensure

their views can be heard and addressed. We have demonstrated our commitment through the assessment and consultation process associated with our recently approved Federation Project. We did not receive any objections to this project and one letter of support from the local landholder for the project. We value our regular engagement with Indigenous People and the local communities in which we live and work.

Assessing Impacts :The Great Cobar Mine is less remote and situated close to the regional town of Cobar. As part of our original planning submission for the Great Cobar Mine, Aurelia commissioned an independent expert to conduct a human health risk assessment of the mining area and surrounding community. The risk assessment included an analysis of lead, arsenic and other metals, which present a potential risk to the community. The study was informed by a comprehensive sampling program and included tests of bio-accessibility. We communicated with NSW Health in preparing the program as we were unable to locate any comparable studies conducted by health organisations within the region. This demonstrated how far we are prepared to go to mitigate potential risks associated with our future operations. The assessment demonstrated our project was unlikely to have an impact on the health of the community in Cobar or surrounds.

Risk Mitigation : We further mitigate the potential risks of our ongoing operations through a range of monitoring and sampling techniques including:

- Ongoing monitoring of air quality via recognised methods including the analysis of total particulates, particulate matter less than 10 microns, and metals.
- Our sites are zero discharge sites. However, we conduct ongoing monitoring of water quality including metals to ensure we are effectively managing and mitigating potential risks.
- Ongoing occupational hygiene monitoring of our employees, especially employees who work in high-risk areas. This includes dust monitoring and total diesel particulates.
- A Lead Management Plan which includes a Trigger Action Response Plan if any issues are identified.

While any instance of non-compliance to our development consents is concerning, unfortunately these do occur from time to time. However, Aurelia values transparency and immediately reports any instances of actual or potential material harm to the environment. We ensure these non-compliances are thoroughly investigated and put in place actions to reduce the likelihood of repeat incidents.

Creating jobs, supporting business and investing locally

The NSW critical metals sector is a part of the socio-economic fabric of regional NSW. For the smaller communities adjacent to our operations: Cobar, Nymagee and Majors Creek, we are contributing significantly to regional vibrancy. . Within our business, many of our people live in the communities where we operate. This has generated a strong understanding of the important role we play – creating jobs, supporting business and operating responsibly. We currently directly and indirectly employ 458 people across our asset portfolio. In Financial Year 2023 alone, we distributed

— A\$395.8M in economic value across the State, including employee wages, community investments and expenditure, local business spend, and payments to governments.

With global demand for critical metals forecast to rise considerably, there are significant economic opportunities for regional NSW. To increase supply, Aurelia has a compelling opportunity to develop two new critical metals mines that will generate hundreds of regional jobs and significant socio-economic benefits.

The Great Cobar Mine and Federation Mine were both recently approved by the NSW Government. The mines will provide critical base metals and gold while generating ongoing employment opportunities and direct economic investment to far west NSW. Aurelia is currently developing the Federation Mine and Great Cobar will follow.

I would like to close by stating that our vision is to be the developer and operator of choice for critical base metals and it is key that we operate responsibly to achieve this and retain our licence to operate. As the world decarbonises, the demand for gold and critical metals will increase. Under every scenario modelled by the World Bank *Minerals for Climate Action: The Mineral Intensity of the Clean Energy Transition* there is a significant increase in the volumes of critical minerals required.

NSW has a competitive advantage and opportunity to prosper given the state is well endowed with minerals critical for this energy transition. Supported by the comprehensive assessment process of new projects and the modern regulatory framework, NSW can continue to develop and mine critical minerals while minimising the potential risks to communities.

I trust that the information presented in this submission to the Committee assists in their deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Quinn
Managing Director
Aurelia Metals
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