

**Submission
No 84**

**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: Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation

Date Received: 5 September 2023



ABN: 77 548 143 187

ICN: 7398

WELLINGTON VALLEY WIRADJURI ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

04.09.2023

Parliamentary Inquiry on: The current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales.

To Whom it may concern,

Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation (WVWAC) would like to thank you for your invitation to provide a response for This Aboriginal Cultural Heritage issue relevant to obligations to protect our Heritage within our Traditional Lands. Wellington Valley Wiradjuri represent traditional families with identified apical ancestry pre European occupation with our known Traditional Lands. We know our culture, country and continue with our association with our traditional lands (Ngurangbang).

We are making this submission to express our concern about the planned Bowdens and Silver mine that threatens to do irreparable damage to the public health and environment of our Traditional Clan Lands due to the high potential for Lead and Zinc contamination.

We have seen various media about the Newcrest Cadia gold mine. The lack of response from Government is very concerning to us. It has taken local citizens to test their blood and drinking water to find elevated levels of minerals from the mine to see any genuine action. This leaves our Traditional Aboriginal Organisation with very significant concerns for the health of property owners, our land and our water.

Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation (WVWAC) have through consultation with other Traditional Elders and Traditional Community with cultural knowledge have the following comments:

1. Water contamination from Acid Mine Drainage.

The planned mine operators predict that 1.6 mega litres of toxic chemicals will leach into the groundwater system each day. Lawsons Creek, which feeds the Cudgegong River and provides the drinking water for Gulgong, will be contaminated forever. This is a fundamental environmental and health concern for both the people, native animals and stock that rely on this water source. We also can find no remediation plan for this type of contamination.

2. Water security and availability.

The mine proposes to use roughly 5 megalitres of water every day. The Lue area is often drought prone and this quantity of water isn't available and has been proven for generations by the farmers that surround Lue. Bowdens' activities will result in a loss of surface water flow to the Lawson Creek catchment. This will have a significant impact on all those who rely on this critical water source.

3. The tailings dam will contain toxic chemical residue.

The planned tailings dam will hold approximately 30 million tons of potentially acid forming tailings, including most of the 43,700 tonnes of chemicals used in ore processing. Many of these chemicals are highly toxic, including sodium cyanide, arsenic, caustic soda, copper sulphate, zinc sulphate, lead and zinc collector. In various reports there is notes that this Tailings Storage Dam will also hold 17-20% of the lead, zinc and silver mined that is lost during processing.

The dam will be built over an area of several creeks which then drain to Lawsons Creek. There is also a mapped major geological fault line above the water table at the headwaters of the Lawson Creek, which flows into the Cudgegong River at Mudgee. This was mappen by CRA Mining (Commonwealth Resources Australia) in the late 1980's and early 1990's. It is proposed to have a footprint of 112.5 hectares, across uneven ground. If the dam is compromised in any way the chemicals and other toxins will contaminate our environment for centuries to come. This is a real concern after the Cadia mine dam wall failure which had a second dam below, there is not a secondary retention pond planned for the Bowdens Project.

4. Traffic and Transport dangers

There are real concerns as this project plans to move by truck carrying dangerous processing chemicals like cyanide, arsenic and antimony through our communities two to three times a week to the mine site. The regions roads and the Lue Road are not suitable for transport of this class of chemical, as there are frequent animal interactions causing vehicle accidents.

The Project also plan to move all processed concentrate by road, this will be trucked on B-Doubles six days per week, from 7am-6pm, along the Lue Road and through Mudgee, to Wellington and across to Yeoval and on to Parkes. The roads they plan on adding additional heavy vehicle movements to are already deteriorating and this causes additional safety concerns around contamination to Curra Creek near Wellington which drains to the Bell River for 1.5km then to the Macquarie River which Geurie and Dubbo rely on for drinking water.

There appears to be no risk mitigation for accidents involving slurry trucks full of lead/zinc and other chemicals. It is also impossible for accident-free transport over the life of the mine.

5. Environment and Biodiversity Impacts.

Report state that the project has earmarked 457 Hectares of bushland and has proposed to clear this habitat. This clearing will negatively disturb Critically Endangered Fauna, Box Grassy Woodland and make major changes to ground and surface water flows. The impact on Koalas is not limited to the immediate area due to fragmentation of their habitat and is at odds with the overall objectives of the NSW Koala Recovery Plan to reverse the decline of Koala numbers in NSW.

The region is also recognised as home to critically endangered birds like the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot, and the endangered Small Purple Pea (*swainsona recta*). There are also additional concerns around noise and light pollution and how this will affect native animals.

6. Tourism and Farming.

We have concerns as to the negative affect that the Bowdens Project will have on local tourism and the farming community as a whole. Will there be potential contamination to locally produced food and stock from lead and other toxins. What will tourists who go to the Olive Farm and Lue Pottery. Lue Motor Bike Track and other places think, will there be a negative impact with potentially a total loss of tourism to the area.

Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation work closely with landowners to ensure the environment, cultural heritage and native species are protected by working together to be ecologically sustainable without being out of balance. This Mine project threatens every bit of this and we are very



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anxious as to what the future of this area will hold for our descendants not in just 5 or 10 years time but in 80 to 150 years.

WWAC look forward to further participating in the above project, sharing our knowledge of county and to ensure our Heritage is protected. We trust our response meets your requirements. Please contact WWAC Directors should you require our assistance to address any Aboriginal issues to support your future plans.

Regards,

Bradley R. Bliss J.P.
WWAC CEO and Contact Officer
Senior Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Field Officer
Senior Aboriginal Cultural Mentor and Educator
Traditional Owner Clan Descendant – Project Area