

**Submission
No 110**

**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: Mrs Sarah Onions

Date Received: 4 September 2023

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

Dear Director

My name is Sarah Onions, I live in the vicinity of the proposed Bowden's Silver Mine. Due to the disruption Covid brought to our lives my husband and I chose to move to our beautiful farm at the beginning of 2021. Our home is set in a stunning natural valley, surrounded by a diverse range of wildlife, including wombats, wallabies, lyrebirds, Gang Gang Cockatoos, kangaroos & a nearby koala colony. We enjoy the benefits of growing our own food, harvesting rainwater for our drinking water, the use of clean groundwater for our gardens & stock, no light or noise pollution and the joy of sharing this place with our family, friends and many visitors via our farm-stay accommodation. We have invested our life savings, our energy and passion into our farm and this community. We are contributing to tourism in the region and, in fact, this coming weekend we are hosting over 350 people on our farm for the NSW Orienteering Championships.

We were extremely disappointed that the community consultation meeting held in February at Mudgee was essentially a farce, designed to appease our community into thinking that their voices & concerns were being heard. When the reality is that without an impartial arbitrator in attendance those views have not been fully considered in the approval process and most disappointingly it removed our community's ability to formally & legally appeal the decision made.

The Mudgee Region is an area known for its diverse agriculture, growing sheep, beef, crops and of course the superb viticulture industry. We feed our State and beyond. We are a highly regarded destination for tourism, primarily because of the beauty of our natural surrounds and local produce.

The Bowden's project threatens to destroy our current way of life and that of all future generations. They have shown no clear plan to mitigate the effects their proposed mining will have on the environment with the exposure of heavy metals, acid mine drainage and primarily lead. Professor Mark Taylor, in his submission, stated that there is no safe level of lead. Surely that one sentence should be enough to put a stop to this madness.

Future events like the one we are hosting this weekend, bringing many visitors & tourism dollars, from across NSW and Australia to our region, would cease to occur as no-one will want to visit a toxic location and put themselves and their families at risk.

We all rely on water for life. Out here water is a precious & limited resource and the documentation provided by Bowden's shows that they currently do not have sufficient water to go ahead with the project. As a community we are concerned about where they propose to draw this non-existent water from. Will our groundwater aquifers and creeks be drained and most frighteningly contaminated? And not just contaminated for now, but forever in the same way the

abandoned mine at Sunny Corner has been for decades. Dr Hadyn Washington in his submission provides clear evidence that heavy metals never “go away” and most accumulate in body organs. He additionally quotes Earth Science Australia (ESA n.d.): One of the most under-publicized problems facing environmental health in Australia is that of toxic waste emissions or acid mine drainage (AMD) from abandoned mining sites. It threatens the quality of the surface and ground water supply with contamination of toxic heavy metals and high levels of acidity. From reading through the Bowden’s documentation there is no current plan to prevent this from happening to our waterways. Will our rainwater tanks collect the heavy metals from the airborne dust in the same way it is occurring to the people surrounding the mine at Cadia? How do I explain to my children that they will not be able to bring our grandchildren to visit us at our HOME as it will be too dangerous to their developing minds & bodies.

As a society we removed lead from paints and petrol as the research is clear on the long-term damage. Why is it then seemingly fine for our Government to approve the mining of heavy metals and releasing these toxic heavy metals into the environment today?

We have a quality of life here that is second to none. It is a piece of Australian natural paradise. The proposed mine threatens to diminish that quality. There will be noise, light, air & other environmental pollution. We have invested our life savings in our property. The mine threatens our financial security with the very real possibility that the re-sale value of our home will be compromised in a similar way to what occurred to the families in the Bylong Valley with the Bylong Valley Coal Project (KEPCO). There are more than 150 properties and families who are in close proximity to the mine who will be similarly affected.

We would ask that the personal voices of our community please be considered, along with the many high quality and well-researched submissions, during this inquiry. The current community and future generations deserve to have a future that is safe.