

Submission  
No 146

**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:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

To whom it may concern

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023

## **Submission**

### **Inquiry into current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in NSW.**

I am a local Blayney resident and I have been living on the family property for the past 15 years. Our family has owned the family-owned property here since 1903 and have been continuously farming in the Blayney area since the 1860's.

I have been heavily involved in working against the McPhillamy's Gold mine project for the past 4-5 years. During the past 12 months I have also been involved in the Bowden's Lead mine at Mudgee. I have also had a bit to do with the dust issues that Cadia mines have been having since the tailings dam wall collapse Cadia Gold mine in 2008. During that time I have gained a lot of knowledge that I feel can contribute to this submission.

I will just complete each item in dot points below.

1. The IPC process for both McPhillamy's and Bowden's was flawed to start with as the proposed mine developers have direct access to all of the government departments, there was a lot of conversations and negotiations being held behind closed doors and they managed to just get every item ticked off approved as an individual item, but when the cumulative effects are added up it draws a completely different picture.
2. In the early days of the project when the IPC hearing was announced the minister at the time set the IPC hearing as a public hearing instead of a public meeting. The IPC guidelines are very grey but there is a big difference between the two. This meant that there were very minimal but highly expensive options to appeal the results of the IPC public hearing.

3. The McPhillamy's project was held up in the approval process for nearly two years due to the fact the mines did not have enough allocation on the water licences to get that water part of the project approved. This was only achieved when the water minister at the time approved a "Special Purpose Water Access Licence" to allow the mines to purchase water licences downstream of Carcoar dam to use at the mines.
4. Regis were also successful in changing the type of water licenses from environmental to mining use and purchasing 192 ML of water licences upstream of Carcoar dam.
5. BSAL was one of the first items to get ticked off Regis's approval list and the BSAL approval process is very open to interpretation as it goes on soil type and gradient of soil. Some of the land in this area is some of the most productive, natural landscape, drought resistant land in the whole of NSW. A lot of properties in the area have been held in the one family for over one and a half centuries. The land values, the consistent livestock carrying capacity and the high constant rainfall proves that this is very valuable agricultural land that needs to be permanently preserved from the total destruction of mining.
6. The Bowden's and McPhillamy's projects were both put to the DPE within a few months of each other early in 2018. The preliminary EIS was very minimal with only a very basic mine design being proposed. Both projects have taken over 5 years to finally to get to the IPC approval stage. I have recently heard that Regis has spent somewhere between \$300M to \$500M to get the project to the project to this IPC approval stage. The mining companies are using the government agencies and the public to finalise the design of the proposed mines and to see what they can get away with. This process is completely flawed as our group is less than 10 voluntary members who have put in thousands of hours work to fight the proposed mine.
7. Thought a lot of the government agency reports they have included pictures and modelled information that has been supplied by Regis. The government should be forced to complete their own research and modelling to prove that the models are correct. With the recent approval of the two new mines in the Central West there is going to be a lot more mining companies looking to set up in the area. I believe that the planning approval process is flawed, and the Government departments should engage and run any consultants that are needed to complete any modelling / report with the proposing mining companies paying the Government to complete the works. This would solve a lot of issues and put some public trust back everything as a lot of reports and modelling have been completed to the proposing mines requirement and approval process.
8. There is not enough water in the local area to support another large water user. The mine would take about the same amount of water as a large town of 40 to 50 000 people would. Bathurst, Orange and Cadia mines have all nearly ran out of water in the past 3-year droughts and without new major dams being constructed in the area the whole area and more water being released for the environment, the whole area will run out of water in a prolonged drought between 3 to 10 years. This will happen

again just like it did between 1900 and 1910. With the world trying to reduce electricity and carbon it is not sustainable to put a very small pipeline in and pump water over 90 km to the mine site. There is plenty of water available in the local area we just need to utilise it better. Look at the recent Molong and Eugowra floods late last year.

9. BODC - Back in the 1970 the Bathurst Orange Development Co-operating was planning to build a new city of 80-100 000 people on the highway between Bathurst and Orange. This project was canned due to the lack of available in the local area.
10. Ever since the tailings dam broke at Cadia Gold mine the whole area has had a lot of concerns for dust and contamination of drinking water, livestock drinking contaminated water, dust settling on the rooves of local houses and pastures that the livestock are eating. Over the past 5 years the EPA has fined Cadia several times with the maximum \$15 000 fine which is severely under the fines that should be imposed for such offences. It is only now that the locals have got together with consultants that have been involved in the McPhillamy's and Bowden's projects that the Cadia locals started blood and water testing. In the past six months it has indicated that the contaminated dust has travelled a lot further and it is a lot bigger issue than the government bodies expected. A lot of people in the local community that are not involved in the mining industry have been saying this for the past 4 years and now they are only starting to act after it has been proven that there is an issue. This should have been dealt with as soon as the dam wall broke back in 2018, but the EPA did not have the powers that the once had to deal with it.
11. Underground water is one of our biggest concerns as no-one knows exactly how the underground water system operates, how it is drawn down and how it is re-charged. It is common knowledge that the mines at Cadia have drawn down the underground water table for approximately a 15km radius and up to a 10 meter draw down on some local bores in the area. Regis have modelled that their mine will have a drawdown of a 1km radius and a drawdown of 1m. This has been done to comply with the current underground aquifer interference regulations. Who is responsible if the modelling is wrong and there is a lot bigger drawdown than expected. This is particularly hard to measure in our local area as we have a lot of natural springs that feed local waterways and keep all the small waterways flowing. We have three creeks running through the property and they are almost permanent, as the springs will open up in the middle of a major drought and keep the creeks flowing. I have got photos of this happening in 2018 right in the middle of the past 3-year drought.
12. Fight between agriculture and mining. With the current Cadia gold mine and the two approved mines in the local area. This is creating a split within the community with people and businesses who are involved within the mining industry and people and businesses that are involved in the agricultural and non-mining industries. This is dividing families and communities as there is now becoming a clear division between the two parties. One of the most common arguments between families and communities is that you need mining to support all the things that you enjoy in life,

such as mobile phones, building material and vehicles. The agriculture sector is saying that you also need a strong agriculture sector with good water supplies to ensure continued food production and water.

13. Noise, blasting and Vibrations the general dust. This area is of great concern for a lot of people and businesses that must operate near an existing or newly approved mine. If these projects are to be approved real-time permanent needs to be publicly available. This would put some confidence back with locals as they would know that there has been no modifications or removal of the data that has been collected.
14. Human health and safety. I do not believe that has been any studies that have looked into residents' health that are required to live next to an adjacent to an existing mine site. There should be some sort of medical database created to record what people were living within a certain distance from a mine site and any health issues should be recorded on that database. This would allow doctors and the medical profession to alert locals of any potential health issues and if anything can be done to limit the effects. I believe that employees that are employed by mines are different because they are taking on those risks and are paid a premium wage when they take on a job in the mining sector. There is an element of risk and long-term health impacts they are all aware of, especially those that choose to work underground at a mine site.
15. Current weak government regulations and best mining practice. During the past few years, I have notes that a lot of government regulations that the mines are required to follow are stated as being best practice. This says to me that there are minimal regulations in these areas especially groundwater, noise, vibrations, structural damage to local building, increasing traffic on roads that do not currently meet design standards and dust. This has been proven with the recent issues that the EPA now has to deal with at Cadia. I believe that if there is to be an increase in mining activity in the Central west then there needs to be Government offices permanently set up in these smaller towns so that government agencies like the EPA have a permanent office set up with adequate staff to see what is going on all the time day and night.
16. Night lighting and effect on local bee producers is something that is often forgotten about and needs more consideration when looking into approving a large mine in and area.
17. Critical minerals strategy. During the IPC hearing for the McPhillamy's project the recently approved Critical Minerals Strategy was mentioned a lot with the NSW State Government agencies looking to increase mining activities in the Central West with more mines to be approved. I believe that this policy needs a lot more work and consideration for the existing Agriculture sector that has been set up over the past 200 years in the area and mining has only been allowed on a bigger scale in the past 20 years. In the local area there has been a lot of underground mines being flooded out and abandoned with very poor re-habitation completed. If the Government is going to down the track of more mining the Government will need to take money from the

large mining companies as bonds to keep for re-habitation and if the mine goes bankrupt.

18. Social Impact. The McPhillamy's and Bowden's projects have been proven that there is a lot of residents that will be forced to live within a few kilometres of the approved mines. There is also existing businesses and local schools that are also located very close to the mines, and it is going to become more of an issue if more mines are approved close to existing residents and schools.
19. Local traffic infrastructure / fatalities on local roads. A lot of the existing road infrastructure around the approved mines is not up to a high standard. There has been a lot of fatalities on country roads recently and adding more traffic to poorly designed roads will only create more issues and accidents.
20. Approved projects need to be financially viable. Regis have invested so much time and money into the McPhillamy's project that it is no longer a viable project on its own. They will need to start up other mining projects in the area and process the ore at the approved McPhillamy's mine site. Regis stated in a public meeting the other week that they will also investigate underground mining at the site. All the locals have known of the mines intentions, and they should be made to put their full intentions on the table before any projects are approved.
21. Regis and mining companies should not be allowed to sponsor and build community support for any proposed project while it is with the DPE and IPC for assessment.
22. Government agencies should not be allowed to sign off on any noise or dust management plans until the results of this inquiry are finalised.

Thankyou for taking the time to read my submission.