

**Submission  
No 163**

**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:** Ms Lucy White

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## **Submission to NSW 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.**

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My name is Lucy White and I submit this statement as a regional tourism professional who has been employed in the regional tourism industry, in the Mudgee Region, Central West and Western/Outback regions of NSW since the mid 1990s, specifically in Managerial roles. I have lived in the region since 1987.

As a tourism professional, it is my view that the mining of heavy metal minerals will have significant negative impacts on the Visitor Economy and the tourism industry in the region.

Below I outline some key points of objection, submitted by a regional tourism professional who has grave concerns about the impact of a lead mine on the tourism industry in this region.

### **Professional background**

- CEO of Mudgee Region Tourism for 5 years
- Executive Officer of Central NSW Tourism for 4 years
- Destination Development Manager Bathurst Regional Council and
- Since 2018, employed as the General Manager of Destination Country & Outback NSW – one of 7 regional networks established by the NSW state govt in 2017. The Destination Networks are the conduit between the NSW state government, the local governments and tourism business across the region.
- From 2012 – 2016 I served as an elected Councillor on the Mid-Western Regional Council.

In submitting this document, I am not representing any of those organisations, but offer my submission and opinion based on this tourism experience.

I would be prepared to give evidence at a hearing to substantiate this submission.

### **Fast facts – Mudgee Region Visitor Economy (source Tourism Research Australia / Destination NSW July 2023)**

- The visitor economy in the Mudgee Region is currently worth \$334 million per annum.
- To end of calendar December 2022, 724,000 Visitors came to the Mudgee Region
- These visitors are spending \$334 million annually in the Mudgee Region
- That's \$923, 000 every day, and that's \$641 every minute.
- 931 people are directly employed due to this visitor spending.
- This heavy metal mine claims that 230 jobs will be created over a period of 23 years
- The tourism industry provides 21 times the number jobs in metal mining.
- And 6 times the jobs in mining other than coal mining (source Decisive Consulting Feb 2023)
- It's likely that 50% impact of jobs will be lost as the impact is felt- visitors stay away fearing health concerns, so :

- If the Average wage for tourism / hospitality worker is \$70,000 – that means a loss of \$35 million to the local economy if it means 465 people are out of a job
- Brand and reputational damage: the brand of Mudgee as a quality wine and food producing region with a pristine and clean environment will be hit hard by perception of it being a toxic environment - visitors will diminish.
- Many Australians know Mudgee region as quality place to visit and live and invest.
- Mudgee has won the hearts of hundreds of thousands of Australians who have voted it 'Top Tourism Town' – not once, but twice.
- The value of that brand recognition is incredible, invaluable and the envy many other destinations. This reputation should not be ignored.
- As quoted in a 2022 edition of Australian Traveller magazine: *"NSW's burgeoning food and wine hub of Mudgee has held onto its crown for Australia's top tourism town for a second year running, proving the first time was no fluke."*
- The reputation of the Top Tourism Town as a place tarnished by lead poisoning, lead mining and acid mine drainage will soon be diminished forever.
- Mudgee Region Tourism's Destination Management Plan 2020-2025 specifically addresses 'wellness tourism', identifying it as one of five primary experience themes.
- Wellness tourism is a growing sector globally, integrating sustainability as much as it does human health and wellbeing.
- 'Wellness' is also a priority for the regional network – Destination Central West Destination Management Plan 2022 – 2030 " 'Nature and the region's wildlife, from birdwatching to kayaking at Ganguddy (Dunns Swamp) and walks in the Wollemi National Park, to name but a few'.
- Lead dust, trucks on roads and a shortage of water for locals, let alone high spending visitors is not compatible with a continuing enhancement of the tourism industry as valuable as the Mudgee Region industry.
- In my view, the irony of an investment into a Wellness Strategy to enhance the tourism brand cannot be ignored.
- There is an obvious conflict between attracting tourists interested in high-quality local wine and food and/or having a wellness focus and the risks of a lead mine.
- The Mudgee Region is recovering from a disruption in 2020 to the visitor economy which was unprecedented. The impacts of travel restrictions, numerous lockdowns and the immediate halt to people movement, increased health & safety concerns exacerbated the issue.
- The economic impact of this was ugly: at the end of 2021, there was a 32% downturn on the pre covid numbers. A lead mine will have a similar economic impact.

Mudgee Wine Industry - tasting and buying wine is the primary reason (42%) that drive 724,000 people to visit annually

- Visitors are coming to the Mudgee region for wine (42%), to eat out (66%) and 21% to bushwalk
- With a viticultural history that stretches back to 1858, Mudgee has played a key role in the Australian wine story. The beautifully soft and intimate nature of much of the countryside around Mudgee is fashioned by the outer rim of hills which create the "nest".
- The smaller hills within the perimeter give rise to a panorama of mini vistas with ever more valleys nesting in their midst. This is the stunning location where the winemakers, vigneron and grape growers ply their craft. (Wine Australia)

- 42% or 304,000 visitors will not travel to 'drink lead, not red' in a region with a reputation damaged by potential impacts of lead and zinc mining on their health, their food, the wine and the water quality.
- **This is a lead mine :Bowden's own projected ore volumes show that 90 times more lead than silver will be produced over the life of the mine.( Lead 130,000 t; Silver 1417 t)**

## **Fast Facts Tourism + Visitor Economy in NSW**

**The Visitor Economy Explained** : *Tourism is now described by the state government as the visitor economy because it's big business. The visitor economy encompasses the direct and indirect contributions to the economy, it is 'everyone's' business resulting from a person (a visitor) travelling outside their normal place of residence, meaning that businesses benefit from this industry.*

- Tourism has been recognised is one of the **7 engine industries** expected to drive the economy of Regional NSW over the next 17 years
- It is identified as one of 50 new priorities to drive long term stimulus impact (*NSW 2020 Economic Impact*)
- 2020 – 2021 NSW's visitor economy at 3.1% was worth more than Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Mining at 1.8% (National Visitor Survey)
- NSW held nearly 32% of 2021-2022 Tourism Investment Pipeline being the largest of all states and territories with 59 projects valued at \$14.1 bn.
- Aviation \$5.5bn, Accommodation \$4.7bn, Arts recreation + business services \$4.0bn, Regional Investment \$1.1bn (TRA Tourism Investment Monitor 2021/22)

### **At the state level the NSW**

- The NSW Government's vision is to be the premier visitor economy in the Asia Pacific, contributing \$65b in total visitor expenditure by 2030.
- Regional NSW will contribute \$45bn to this target.

The NSW visitor economy supports:

- 107,115 businesses
- 296,000 jobs
- In 2018/19, the visitor economy contributed \$38 billion (6%) to NSW Gross State Product (NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030)
- The visitor economy is central to the NSW Government's economic plans.
- It is now a government imperative that all regional and local tourism plans are prepared to align to the objectives and the targets in this Visitor Economy Strategy, which on page 16 *states*:

*'Revitalising the state's visitor economy will require strong leadership from the NSW Government. This new strategy articulates how the Government will lead the coordinated response to today's challenges and drive visitor economy growth into the future.'* (VES page 16.)

## THE VISITOR ECONOMY EXPLAINED

The visitor economy encompasses the direct and indirect contributions to the economy resulting from a person (a visitor) travelling outside their normal place of residence.

The visitor economy supports more than  
**107,115**  
 businesses  
 and over  
**296,000**  
 jobs

Tourism Gross State Product was equivalent to  
**6%**  
 NSW GSP

**\$7 billion**  
 Contribution to NSW Gross Regional Product (GRP)

In NSW, the visitor economy supports more than 107,115 businesses and over 296,000 jobs. It is the state's fifth largest employment group, accounting for approximately seven per cent of total jobs. In 2018/19, the visitor economy contributed \$38 billion (6 per cent) to NSW Gross State Product (GSP).

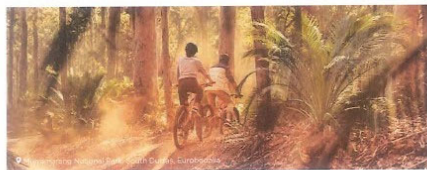
The activity of the visitor economy provides direct revenue for businesses in NSW, and tax revenue for governments to spend on services for the community. The community also benefits through job creation, investment in public amenities and services, and lifestyle enhancements. The visitor economy not only sustains existing businesses, it also creates new businesses and population growth, and supports cultural activities and the arts.

The visitor economy is the lifeblood of many regional communities contributing \$7 billion to NSW Gross Regional Product (GRP).

The visitor economy is a major source of income for many – particularly for women and young people who make up a significant proportion of the workforce. Visitors, especially in the business and scientific communities, add intellectual capital to the state, which enhances our ability to thrive in other sectors of the economy.

The economic benefits of the visitor economy to NSW is clear, but it is also important to highlight the social benefits delivered through a vibrant visitor sector. Positive travel experiences and connections with community are important contributors to social wellbeing, as are the shared experiences that come with entertainment, hospitality and events from sporting to culture.

The visitor economy of NSW is not owned by any one stakeholder or business sector. It is co-owned and curated by a range of stakeholders including visitors, businesses, governments, residents, hosts and the community. Only when all these stakeholders work together can the potential of the visitor economy be fully realised.



## The visitor economy is everyone's business

Visitors come to NSW for many reasons: to holiday; visit family and friends; to attend an event; experience arts and culture; to study or learn; to participate in sport, entertainment, employment, business meetings; for presentations and conferences and work incentives or rewards; for shopping or health purposes.

The visitor economy benefits many industry sectors

Picnics, trains, motor transport, car hire, taxis, coach and bus services, roads, airports, wharves, cruise terminals, transport hubs, event spaces, venues and facilities.

Events from major to local festivals, fairs, conferences to sport. Attractions across the range of experiences. Services such as travel agents, visitor information centres, booking state governments and financial institutions.

Accommodation from major chains to short term rentals, apartments and cafes from 5star to the corner coffee shop. Sheds from luxury brands and centres to the local grocer. Education institutions from universities, schools, colleges to private training centres. Health from formal medical facilities to wellness and wellbeing businesses. Workplaces and businesses that employ visitors or otherwise service their needs.

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NSW VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY 2030

### At the Regional Level, the Central NSW visitor economy

At the Year ending December 2022:

- \$1.775 million expenditure
- 4,976,000 visitors
- 5,983,000 overnight stays

**As a tourism professional, it is my opinion that the Bowden's Lead Mine Project at Lue will significantly and negatively impact Mudgee's reputation and consequently devalue the visitor economy and the broader tourism industry.**

**In my opinion, the impacts on the visitor economy were not considered when the lead mine was approved, and to exclude any meaningful mention or exploration of the role tourism and the visitor economy, nor its economic impacts in the Mid Western Regional Council area when considering the strategic context of the project is misleading.**

The proposal did not assess the critical economic impact of the mine. It was silent on the net benefit/cost + the far larger number of jobs at risk from negative impacts on tourism + agriculture.

These 2 industries have underpinned and driven the local economy for decades, and are both proven to be long term, high yield and sustainable industries. A report on the impact to Mudgee found the following :

*'Beyond the impact on this project and the mining sector to consider the much larger number of jobs at risk from negative impacts on other industries, most obviously tourism and agriculture. In addition, other mining projects in the area are at risk from a possible community backlash against mining if the proposed Bowden mine, as expected to produce an average of 5100 tonnes of lead, 6900 tonnes of zinc and 3.4 million ounces of silver per annum, produces major environmental problems.'*

Submission to NSW 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.

- This extract is from a report commissioned. Author Karl Flowers Specialist who provides insights from visitor economy market analysis for feasibility studies and public policy development. For over 25 years, Karl has been consulting to Governments and industry associations on issues related to the tourism sector.
- This report can be provided separately if required.

It is my opinion that none of these factors were considered when the Independent Planning Commission approved this lead mine.

This oversight has caused and continues to cause significant unrest for those hundreds of residents who have invested in the wine, accommodation, food, agriculture and associated industries in the Mudgee Region.

In my work capacity, on a daily basis I speak to those in the tourism industry and there are many who come to me regularly to express their concern for their future, for their physical and mental and wellbeing , and for their ongoing investment and involvement in the tourism industry.