

**Submission
No 159**

**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: Tom Combes

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To whom it may concern.

Thank you for Reading my submission.

My name is Tom Combes, I am a 5th generation land owner and resident of the Lawson Creek Valley. I am the custodian of a 5,000 hectare property that surrounds the village of Lue and the Bowdens Mine. We are South of Lue Village. Our family operates a large agricultural enterprise on Lue Station. Additionally, we operate a large hospitality business on the farm that attracts approximately 20,000 visitors annually. We employ between 15 and 30 Full time and part time employees depending on seasonal requirements. We currently have 9 full time employees.

My experience lies within Community. I am a long term and dedicated volunteer within my community. I am the current Lue RFS Captain, I am the Chairman of the Mudgee Region Action Group, I have been President of the Mudgee Show and the Lue P and C amongst other things. I love my volunteer work and I continually strive to make a safer and more livable community.

I have read the NSW Governments Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy. The strategy promotes "best practice" but fails to recognize that "best practice" just means "the best we can afford to do now". I find it bewildering that although The Hon Paul Toole MP goes to great length to promote Metals Mining in the central west of NSW, the document he endorses fails to recognize the risks to the existing Communities and Environment. It is time that we recognized that "Best Practice" is not good enough.

Metals mining traditionally uses and produces some of the most toxic chemicals we know, things like Cyanide, Sulfuric acid, arsenic, and lead.

The previous NSW Government talked about a "Global Race to locate, develop and establish a secure supply of responsibly sourced critical minerals and high-Tech metals". The problem with the race strategy is that we must compete with a global market. Cost plays a massive role in the race and the first casualty is the environment and then of course the people. If you want to play in the global playground, sometimes you have to play according to other peoples rules.

I do not think we should be playing by other peoples rules and just because someone else can produce a product at a cost, does not mean we should. The world is changing, and the environment is hurting. It's a hard choice but it's these choices that will ensure we have a place to live in the future. Jobs and money is all fine but its not much good if we cant live here.

I had a conversation with a Representative from the EPA a short time ago and she explained that Cadia Mine at Orange should not be compared with Bowdens Mine at Lue. The two mines have been approved at different times.

What that means is that we approve mines on a "Best Practice" basis. We approved them on what is the best we can do now. We don't approve mines on what is required.

I argued at the Bowdens IPC hearing that we should implement conditions that ensure the long term preservation of the Environment and the Community. That we need to consider that Agriculture, Tourism and Lifestyle are the current land uses and were looking down the barrel of a gun. The current proposal was not adequate. The conditions simply made the proponent do what they could afford to do and do what the industry considered best practice today. I argued we must do better. We must ask the existing community and the environment what they need and implement it. If the proponent cannot make it work now, the mineral stays in the ground. It is not going anywhere. Put

the pressure on these mining companies to do better. Don't accept that "best practice" is "best we can do". We are smart, we can work it out.

Ask the community through consultation. Once you have the community's concerns addressed, the rest will come easily. Make the Local affected community your peer review.

The Bowdens Mine at Lue is an open cut mine. Its just 2km from the centre of the Village. The area is a tourism, Agriculture, and lifestyle area. A lot of people live there. It is upstream from Mudgee. There will be a Cyanide processing plant and associated tailings dam is within a stone's throw of Lawsons Creek that flows into the Cudgegong River at Mudgee. The pit will never be filled. The Waste Rock dump that is Potentially Acid bearing will become one of the largest hills in the area and will require management forever, the mine life is just 16 years, the proponent suggests that they can run the mine with no external water source.... the entire model is crazy. What are people thinking? The system is broken when Government Departments approve mines like this.

All the best with your inquiry.

Yours sincerely, Tom Combes.