

Submission  
No 164

**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

## **SUBMISSION TO THE 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**

I am a resident of Iford NSW and a member of the Running Stream Water Users Association. I am concerned about the recent influx of mining operations within our rural communities, including the proposed Bowden's Lead/Silver mine in Lue NSW, and would like to make my concerns heard within this inquiry. My concerns relate to:

- the impact to health of local residents and mine workers
- the impact to waterways including groundwater as well as drinking water
- the impact on farming and land use
- the adequacy of regulators and effectiveness of the current framework for complaints and community concerns, and
- the effectiveness of monitoring, compliance, risk management and harm reduction from mining activities.

One only has to look at the current situation at the Cadia gold mine in Orange to address all of these issues. This is evidence that mining has the potential to impact health of local residents and waterways including groundwater and drinking water, and that the inadequacies of the regulators and the ineffectiveness of monitoring, compliance, risk management and harm reduction result in damage to whole communities.

### **The impact to health of local residents and mine workers**

Mining of all descriptions potentially results in major disturbance of soil minerals which may not be sufficiently suppressed. This can have disastrous long-term effects on the health of neighbouring rural communities. A case in point being the Cadia mine. Blood tests taken from residents who live near the mine have shown high levels of metal contamination. Rainwater holdings also contained high levels of metal contamination. The EPA has launched an investigation into the Cadia mine disaster and the NSW Chief Health Officer has been tasked with undergoing a full health-risk assessment. However, the damage is already done and can't realistically be undone. Toxic dust can also potentially impact communities far and wide. Consider the dust storms in western NSW that resulted in red dust travelling as far as Sydney.

Whilst I am not in a position to comment on measures taken to protect the health of mine workers, I would hope that their wellbeing is also prioritised.

### **The impact to waterways including groundwater as well as drinking water, and the impact on farming and land use**

Mining also creates potential to pollute and disturb groundwater and waterways. The Bowden's mine proposes to take massive quantities of water from Lawson Creek. The decision to proceed with this mining operation shows lack of foresight with regard to potential changes to ground and/or surface water flows and how these changes may affect areas of native vegetation and biodiversity. Contamination or disturbance of the water flow, or permanent loss of good quality groundwater, would

also affect the livelihoods of local farmers and graziers which effects the health and sustainability of the local community. In addition, the Lawson Creek sits within the upper reaches of the Macquarie River Catchment, forming part of the Murray Darling Basin, which has been mapped as key fish habitat by NSW Fisheries.

Surely the time has come for the long-term detrimental impacts of mining to local residents, pristine waterways, farming and other land use, to be given priority over the short-term financial benefits to mining corporations and governments.

**The adequacy of regulators and effectiveness of the current framework for complaints and community concerns, and the effectiveness of monitoring, compliance, risk management and harm reduction from mining activities.**

The situation at Cadia and the decision to proceed with Bowden's Lead/Silver mine have highlighted the inadequacies of regulators and the ineffectiveness of the current framework for complaints and community concerns, as well as the ineffectiveness of monitoring, compliance, risk management and harm reduction from mining activities. How could the situation at Cadia have arisen if monitoring, compliance, risk management and harm reduction from mining activities was adequate? And, in light of the abundant evidence of potential disaster presented to regulators, how could the Bowden's mine be approved if the current framework for complaints and community concerns is an effective platform? Clearly there is work to be done here.

The only way to prevent future disasters is to carefully assess the potential dangers and put whole community/environmental health above corporate benefit. Where local jobs are concerned some people do benefit from the work created at mines but what of other community members working within industries such as farming and the tourist industry whose livelihoods are adversely affected by mining activities? I understand why mining companies flock to our rural communities to profit from the established supply chains but I am appalled that our governments continue to prioritise financial benefits to foreign companies and government coffers over the health and wellbeing of our rural communities. Once the damage is done it cannot be undone.

4 September 2023