

**Submission
No 174**

**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: Miss Maree O'Connell

Date Received: 4 September 2023

To the Portfolio Committee No 2,

I would like to make a submission in response to the Inquiry into minerals mining in New South Wales.

I am a resident of Rylstone, NSW, the town adjacent to the approved lead mine in Lue, NSW. Currently, there are further exploration licenses that form a blanket over Rylstone. I am a Paramedic with NSW Ambulance, based at Rylstone station. I am a mother one child, aged three.

I would like to address the Terms of Reference.

The lead mine (Bowden's Silver) in Lue will contaminate the air in my backyard, the soil in my paddocks and rainwater harvested from my home's roof. Currently, as a small family of three, we grow some of our own vegetables, fruit and berries. We also have chickens for eggs. We are on town water supply but previously, in the drought when we were on water restrictions, we set up rainwater harvesting to irrigate our gardens with, to reduce pressure on the decreasing town water supply. I make my own compost from locally foraged ingredients (for example autumn leaves) and green waste from my garden. Our plan moving forward, was to increase the homegrown component of food and move to more extensive rainwater harvesting and onsite greywater recycling to help with both food and water security as we move into increasing challenging times caused by anthropogenic climate change.

The lead mine at Lue will make all of this impossible and have drastic effects on my health and the health of my child.

Lead will accumulate in the soil, rendering it useless for growing food. I have lived in Sydney where soil is contaminated with lead and growing vegetables is far more expensive and less practical as the cost now involves purchasing materials to construct raised beds and purchasing soil to fill the beds. While that worked in Sydney, where the sources of lead (leaded paint and petrol) have now ceased being used, it won't work here with ongoing contamination. There is no way to stop this.

I will no longer be able to keep chickens. Chickens peck the lead laden soil and the lead is then found in their eggs. Studies have been carried out on chickens in Sydney which have found elevated levels of lead in eggs from backyard chickens.

This will have various health impacts.

If we carry on living our current lifestyle, I expect that we will all be exposed to lead and will see lead accumulate in our blood. My three year old child will be particularly vulnerable. She may suffer any of the numerous health impacts of elevated blood lead levels including headaches, behavioral problems, learning difficulties, brain and kidney damage. These all have the potential to effect her lifelong and may effect her ability to succeed in school and employment, form healthy relationships and may have financial impact also.

If we change our lifestyle to avoid some of these exposures (stop growing food and harvesting rainwater), we face increased financial stress as we are more reliant on supermarkets and more reliant on paying for town water. We lose a sense on control and empowerment of being able to provide ourselves with the basics of life, which will negatively impact our mental health. If we spend more time indoors (as may be advised on windy days) we will see a decrease in exposure to sunlight (vitamin D), which is vital for good human health. My daughter will also be less connected to the landscape and natural environment and lose the benefits that come with simply walking barefoot on earth.

As yet, I have not found any targeted public awareness campaign or information from either Bowden's Silver or the New South Wales government on how I should reduce my own and my daughter's exposure to lead. I have seen no information that even points to the fact that my backyard will be irreversibly contaminated, and that the contamination will render my soil unsafe for growing food or raising chickens. People in the community have been misled into thinking the mine is safe only because the Government has yet to communicate the risk.

What I HAVE seen is experts in the field of lead exposure, present clear information to the Government, multiple times, that there is no safe level of lead.

Thank you

Maree O'Connell

Rylstone NSW