

Submission
No 119

**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

Date Received: 5 September 2023

Partially
Confidential

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 5th generation life-long resident of Mudgee; from a family which now spans 7 generations of residency in the Mudgee valley.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to express my concerns regarding the planned Bowden's Lead, Zinc and Silver Mine which has the very real potential to cause major and irreparable damage to the environment of this region and to the health of the inhabitants of this region.

Years ago, but in my lifetime, Mudgee was not a mining town. It was largely a thriving service town for the wide diversity of farmers in this area. The Mudgee area has always been a quality food production area. Market gardens thrived along the river flats; the Edgell Company grew its asparagus just on the edge of town; it has long been a grape growing and quality wine production area; other farming pursuits such as cropping, sheep and cattle production and a variety of orchards and also quality honey is produced.

I wish to address just a few of the concerns regarding the proposed Bowden's Mine:

High Risk of Lead Poisoning from dust emissions

No level of lead is safe in humans; it has major, irreparable impacts on health in children and adults.

During drought years we have experienced large dust storms blanketing the area. We also have many days when we have extremely strong winds.

Only yesterday, I visited the local Mudgee Cemetery on the outskirts of Mudgee and whilst there, I cleaned with a wet sponge, three polished granite slabs on family graves. I was rinsing the sponge in a bucket of clean water. By the time I had finished, the water in the bucket had turned black; it was not brown dust from the ground; the

water was pitch-black. I believe this to be coal dust from the mines to the north-east of Mudgee. The white marble headstones at the cemetery are also coated with a black stain from the coal dust mixing with dew and rain; and a brand new sandstone grave was completely covered in a coating of fine black dust within weeks. I have also been informed by a monumental mason that it is coal dust causing the black coating on the headstones. The same black staining can be seen on buildings in the township of Mudgee.

The proposed Bowden's lead, zinc and silver mine is only approximately half the distance from the township of Mudgee as the coalmines are. If the coal dust can reach the township of Mudgee, there is a huge probable risk that lead contaminated dust from the proposed Bowden mine will also cover much of the Mudgee valley, including the township and all of the agricultural areas in between.

This has the potential to severely impact the health of humans, livestock and contaminate the wide diversity of agricultural industries as well as impact wildlife species.

Furthermore, Bowden's have sought further explorations licences which would extend the area of the mine even closer to Mudgee on one side; and Kandos and Rylstone on the other side.

They say the mine will provide employment (for one generation), but at what cost? If the multi-million dollar wine and olive and agricultural industries in the valley are impacted through contamination by lead dust; and the farms, crops, pasture and livestock are contaminated, there will be many more jobs lost, for generations to come.

There is a large, commercial olive orchard and award winning olive oil business now finding itself in close proximity to the proposed

Bowden's lead, zinc and silver mine. The olive orchard is situated on the western side of the proposed Bowden's mine, within a distance of approximately 2 kilometres.

In summer, we have frequent strong, hot westerly winds. It is therefore highly probable that this award winning olive oil business will be subjected to lead-contaminated dust from Bowden's Mine.

Would anyone be comfortable consuming olives and oil produced from an olive orchard in this locality, which has a high chance of being contaminated by lead dust should the Bowden's Mine commence operations? Why should business owners such as this, who have invested heavily of their time and financial resources to establish award winning food industries in this area be overlooked in favour of a mining business which has the capacity to cause huge detrimental impacts to the environment and human health for not only this generation, but for generations to come?

Why should the residents of Lue (which is located only 2 kilometres from the Bowden's mine site) and the surrounding area, and indeed the entire Mudgee Region have to live with the threat of detrimental consequences of lead, zinc and silver mining on their health, finances, livelihoods and irreversible damage to the environment?

The multi-million dollar wine industry and the multi-generational farming properties; the environment, water security, wildlife and endangered species in this region would all be at risk from the consequences of lead, zinc and silver mining from airborne toxic dust and possible leaching of toxic chemicals into vital underground and aboveground water supplies.

The Cadia Mine near Orange has already demonstrated that these concerns are very real. The proposed Bowden's mine will be an

open-cut mine, further increasing the risk of contamination by lead dust.

Country people depend on rainwater tanks for their drinking water and if lead dust settles on the roof, when it rains the lead dust will wash down into the tanks and the water in their tanks will be contaminated. This will have a cumulative effect.

Drought and the impact on water availability -

We have experienced many severe, extended droughts in this area and this will continue to be a recurring pattern, particularly with climate change. Water is the life-blood of this region and during drought periods every drop is precious and scarce.

Huge volumes of water will be required to contain the dust emissions from the proposed Bowden's mine and there will be a high likelihood of insufficient water availability to contain the lead-contaminated dust during drought periods.

During the last extended drought, just a few years ago, the water table level dropped and many large trees began dying. The Bowden's Mine will further place a considerable burden on the availability of groundwater.

Tailings dam and toxic chemicals -

I understand this dam will be built over a major geological fault line above the water table at the headwaters of Lawson Creek. In recent times the Cadia tailings dam failed and there is great concern that should the proposed Bowden's mine tailings dam fail in any way, that the toxic chemicals will contaminate the surrounding landscape forever.

Of further serious concern, in the event that Lawson Creek is contaminated by toxic chemicals from the tailings dam, is that Lawson Creek joins the Cudgegong River at Mudgee and then flows past the local wetlands and further along to the town of Gulgong which relies on the Cudgegong River for its water supply.

Furthermore, Lawson Creek and the Cudgegong River are tributaries of the Macquarie River; the source of the Macquarie Marshes, a noted and vital breeding ground for native bird life.