

Submission
No 115

**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**

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Portfolio Committee No 2 – Health

NSW Parliament, Legislative Council

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

Submission

I am making this submission to express my concerns about the recently approved Bowdens Lead, Zinc and Silver mine in my region. I am a voter, rate payer and landholder of property that is 10 km west of Lue and the proposed mine site.

Our farm produces beef, lamb and wool and we have a number of families living here either as workers on the farm or tenants. We rely on water from Lawsons Creek.

We have an unregulated 125ML water licence to take water from Lawsons Creek which is unused due to the lack of availability of this water and consequent changes in farming practices over the years.

We drink rainwater collected from our roofs. The stock and wildlife drink water from dams and from troughs, filled from the creek. We have always been able to rely on Lawsons Creek to provide us with this water. We have experienced many droughts where the creek becomes a series of pools as well as extreme rain events that result in flash flooding of the creek and adjoining flats.

My main concerns within your terms of reference for the upcoming inquiry include:-

1(a & c) HEALTH.

Biomagnification and bioaccumulation of lead and heavy metals from dust is a great risk.

Professor Mark Taylor has stated that “there is no safe level of exposure to lead for humans or biota. There are thresholds of acceptability but these should not be confused with levels of safety. Dust will be the key pathway for lead contamination.”

Young children are especially at risk. Lue village is 2km from the mine. There is a thriving primary school in Lue.

Contamination from lead dust seems inevitable. We will get the dust when an Easterly wind is blowing. It will land on our roofs and end up in our drinking water. The livestock will ingest it through the water and by grazing the paddocks.

Failure of the TSF and contamination of the water in Lawsons Creek will affect a much greater population as this water eventually becomes part of Gulgong’s water supply.

Noise and blasting, lights from the mine will impact the quality of life for the residents of Lue and close neighbours. Increased traffic with heavy trucks carrying away processed ore and others carrying toxic chemicals to the mine site will make the Lue Rd more dangerous than it already is.

Anticipation of noise and blasting causes anxiety issues and affects our mental health.

1.(b)WATER.

The mine site is near the headwaters of Lawsons Creek, and it's smaller Hawkins Creek.

The mine is a water intensive project (1825MI/annum) that does not have an external water supply. They are relying on groundwater licences and rainwater collected on site for all their water needs including for dust suppression and processing of mined material. The mine proposes to use 5MI/day. What will happen in drought years? Will the mine keep using scarce water to suppress dust in dry years?

The damage to the ground water with the mining process will have an effect on local bores. Lue and surrounding farms rely on their bores.

There is the problem of Acid Mine Drainage and contamination of the catchment downstream and possibly the groundwater. Once PAF (potential acid forming) waste rocks or PAF tailings are exposed due to mining, there is no reversal or rehabilitation for the site. Silver mines created in the 1800s are still leaking toxic chemicals into waterways. eg, Sunny Corner. They are expensive to clean up long after the mining companies have gone.

The TSF (tailings storage facility) is designed to leak 1.6MI into the creek catchment per day. Lawsons Creek is a healthy waterway with the many different species of fish having been seen and caught along its banks. Platypus and the native water rat, rakali, have also been sited near the Havilah Bridge on our property.

The TSF is to be built on a Faultline. This will be in place forever. The design for the liner of the TSF is to be approved under another Management plan before mining can proceed. We have seen the news about Cadia, its tailings dam failure. Bowdens will not have a second tailings dam to contain the spillage if its dam fails.

1.(d &e) REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The reports from Cadia fill us with fear. The Government authority, EPA, took years to respond to the community about their concerns.

The granting of the decision for mine approval to the IPC for hearing by the previous minister took away our rights of appeal. It was a disheartening outcome for the community and the mine was given approval despite the overwhelming evidence presented to the IPC of its faults and weaknesses. The mine was given approval with 14 management plans yet to be worked out before mining can commence.

1.(f) ENVIRONMENT.

There will be removal of 180ha of Critically endangered Box Gum Woodland, removal of 139.5ha of Koala habitat, removal of 182.27ha of Regent Honeyeater habitat.

Mines are large emitters of green house gases. This one will be too.

There is no rehabilitation of the mine site after mining has finished. TSF will be left with its toxic waste.

1.(h)

This mine is not appropriate at this site, 2km from Lue and on the headwaters of a healthy water course.

Mudgee is a popular tourist destination. There are many jobs created for the tourist dollar. We must not jeopardise our position as the number one tourist destination, 2 years running for the sake of jobs in a mine whose life is relatively short.

The toxic legacy of this mine and its detriment to human and environmental health and its lack of reliable water should be a deterrent in allowing it to proceed.