Submission No 229

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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I refer to 1.(I) any related matters, of the Terms of Reference, for my submission.
This submission relates to the unfair process of the McPhillamy's Gold Mine approval process undertaken by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), and the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).

Below is my submission, as well as my written submission presented to the IPC Hearing panel.

I have been farming this land for 53 years and 5 generations of my family have done the same and feel I have a vast experience on this area, especially as we have 10 kilometres river frontage. The McPhillamy's proposal is not only completely destructive but archaic in its design.
The number one issue is the fact that the Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) is in the Belubula River, a river that feeds the Murray Darling system. This is damming the river completely and not letting any water flow past this point, a wall almost the same size as Wyangla Dam wall. This whole project is designed in and around this river. Where else in Australia, is a river being dammed off completely and no water left to flow?

CONSIDERATION: That this committee investigate the archaic way in which mining companies are processing gold in this day and age (Cyanide processing), when there are less environmentally destructive methods available.

Another major issue is that this process used paid consultants to model all of the data used in the EIS, and neglected to seek out any local experts for input into this process. Both the proponent and the DPE should have to consult with local people on the ground who can have an advisory role and provide valuable input into the process. This process was one sided contest skewed in favour of the proponent which had multiple extensions until the Department finally shifted the goal posts so they could kick a goal. They have changed the rules especially around water so they could get this project over the line.

As forced stakeholders in this process, nearby neighbours and land owners have had to spend countless hours and also investigations with experts at our own expense, which not only affects us financially but also mentally as well. I cannot stress this enough. Now, as this proposal has been approved by the IPC, just as the community in and around Cadia mine, we now have to become the watchdogs over this mine, and will continuously be forced to keep and eye on their operations and compliance.

CONSIDERATION: The EPA or and independent body should have enough power to affectively monitor these mines and enforce stronger fines and operational changes (such as temporary closures) if the mines are non-compliant (for example, Cadia should have had to shut down all operations as soon as the TSF wall failed back in 2019) . It should not fall back onto the community to report ongoing concerns and be subject to the subsequent health disasters that have arisen.

EIS stands for Environmental Impact Statement, but the environment took a back seat to the economics, so maybe it should be changed to Economic Impact Statement. And the IPC which stands for Independent Planning Commission, was anything but independent. This Commission needs to be demolished because the decision on the project had already been made way before the hearing.
This whole system needs taking back to basics and a total overhaul of balancing development and preserving our environment and communities needs addressing.