BOWDENS SILVER PROJECT

I have a particular concern about the responsible use of water throughout Australia , and projects such as this in the Lawson Creek Valley raise alarm bells .

Water is not the only concern , but there are also matters of dust pollution , the content of the dust , tailings from the workings , noise and remediation of the land .

The project envisages a large open cut pit , the ore to be accessed by drill and blast techniques and presumably large earth moving machinery to create mounds of overburden to expose the ore , or to feed the disturbed earth into the processing plant .

Drilling and blasting is capable of producing enormous amounts of dust particularly in an area whose rainfall is in the order of 500mm p.a (if you're lucky). The dust can settle over a vast area and is a concern for the local population relying on tank water and for livestock relying on dams which are fed by gullies washing dust into them when it does rain . The town of Lue and the school is only 2 kilometres from the mine and well within the range of settling dust . Parts of the Hunter Valley are examples of areas where dust from overburden is affecting the respiratory systems of children , in particular , according to a local G.P. Do we know what is the chemical content of the dust from this mine area ? If the dust contains lead , it becomes particularly dangerous for children , not to mention the rest of the population and animals . A lead processing plant at Boolaroo (near Newcastle) has resulted in lead contamination of the area and significant adverse health affects for children and significant deavaluation of land prices . One could expect costly litigation against the mine and approving authorities if there are adverse health affects and land devaluations around the mine . My concern is that there is no ability to control where dust settles once it has been discharged into the atmosphere . Monitoring dust and averaging over a large area can produceresults which are quite misleading .

As the mine becomes deeper , it is likely to cut through water tables and any water collected from this source might be utilised in the ore processing and ultimately discharged as surface water . An enormous amount of water will be drawn from groundwater from the pit and Bowdens admit that this will reduce the water table by 25 metres on site . More water , presumably salty , will be sourced from a coal mine at Ulan . After this water has been used in the ore processing , it will be discharged as surface water , go through a tailings dam and discharged into , presumably , Lawson Creek . The water flowing along Lawson Creek towards Mudgee will contain traces of tailings and contaminated dust and ,probabably , salt . Native fish might be eliminated and recreational fishing wiped out .

As aquifer levels drop , it will become more difficult for farms to access subterranean water for stock and irrigation .

The mining project could be brought to an abrupt halt if it becomes uneconomic because of a downturn of metal prices . Remediation of the site , or even maintenance , is likely not to take place in those circumstances and we would be left with an unsightly hole in the ground which would probably fill over time with water and become acidic . This could have disastrous consequences for water tables intersecting the mine and badly affect surrounding farms drawing water from these aquifers . A lack of ongoing maintenance would see a deterioration of storage facilities on the mine and leaking and leaching of the contents into the surrounding countryside . We need a guarantee that there will be sufficient funds on hand to carry out any remediation work required if mining suddenly ceases . One could anticipate more litigation in these circumstances .

If the mine does go ahead , one could expect ongoing hostilities from the surrounding residents towards the mine brought about by noise and dust and any deterioration of water quality and availabilty .

Grahame Hellyer
8/07/2020