Objection to the Bowden's Silver Mine Lue NSW

I am deeply concerned about the health, social and environmental impacts that the proposed Bowden Lue Lead, Silver and Zinc Mine will bring to Lue and neighbouring communities if it reaches production stage. I strongly object to this proposal and hope that the NSW Government refuses to approve this project in recognising that the immediate and long-term consequences largely outweigh the Mine's potential economic returns.

Excessive lead exposure is harmful to human health and this has not been adequately addressed through the Mine's Environment Impact Statement (EIS), particularly in regard to the impact on children. Research has continually identified the impact of lead exposure on the health of individuals living and working in mining communities, arguing that exposure to lead should be prevented.[i]. Australian and international studies have exemplified the neurological damage caused through lead exposure and exposure of metals, particularly spread through dust particles and water.[iiiii] The most contaminated children in Australia are located in lead mining and smelting towns. High levels of lead has been exposed throughout the communities of Mount Isa and Bourke, which has caused high blood lead levels in children within these communities. [iv] This has proven to cause developmental and behavioural problems, as supported by the National Health and Medical and Research Council.[v] Further studies have found decreased auditory sensitivity and visuomotor performance among children due to lead exposure causing damage to the brain, particularly in the prefrontal cerebral cortex, hippocampus and cerebellum."[vivii] Lead toxicity also affects the renal system,[viii]with children affected often complaining of a 'tummy ache' due to abdominal pain.[ixx]

Lead poisoning and poisoning from other metals often goes undetected and unmonitored in mining communities, taking years to identify the cumulative health impacts. I am concerned that the NSW 2003 data guidelines used for the mine does not take into consideration the blood lead level of children, which, as experts suggest, needs to be below five micrograms per decilitre in the blood stream, rather than the 10 decilitres proposed.[xi] Lead poisoning will have significant immediate and long-term health consequences for the people of the Lue community, particularly for children. Understandably, with this known and the Mine only two kilometres from Lue Primary School, many residents will wish to leave the Lue community.

The cumulative social impacts must be considered in the planning of communities directly affected by new mines. The Mine's Social Impact Assessment (SIA) does not consider Lue as its own intrinsic social and cultural value but rather, makes vague assumptions about the social impact of the broader Local Government Area (LGA). The SIA also largely underestimates the broader social impacts of the Mine, such as population changes, mental health, noise, strain on local services and tourism, to name some.

Population changes are a concern for many Lue residents. Like other Australian mining towns,[xii] it appears that the economic advantages of the mine will flow out of Lue and into larger regional areas, bringing little economic benefit to Lue. The Mine states that they will employ people from the LGA with no guarantee as to how many jobs will be provided, if any. One common finding for mining communities is the difficulty in attracting and keeping long-term residents, as mining largely changes the demographic structure of communities that are directly impacted, with residents moving out and new families reluctant to move in.

The environmental implications of the Mine appears vast, particularly with concern of water contamination and excessive water usage. Experts claim that acid mining drainage is a key concern due to the 40 million tonnes of waste rock waste from the mine being potentially acid forming. This

would contaminate the Lawson Creek, which flows into the Cudgeegong River at Mudgee, poisoning these waterways and creating irreversible damage. The availability of water is another major concern, as the EIS indicates that 1,857 mega litres of water is proposed to be used by the mine annually; an amount that is environmentally unsustainable over a 16-year period and a threat to the livelihood of the Lue community who rely on the water for farming and community use.

It is clear that the mine's 16 years of proposed activity will be significantly short lived for the ongoing catastrophic impacts for the people of Lue, including the irreversible environmental destruction it will cause. I ask that the NSW Government prioritise the needs of the Lue community, including environmental preservation, before the immediate short-term economic returns that the Mine will bring.

References

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