

24 July 2020

Submission to the Bowdens Silver mine at Lue (Reference SSD-5765)

This is a submission raising objections to the proposed silver mine near Lue, NSW by Bowdens Silver.

My family, friends and I have been visiting Mudgee and the surrounding districts since 2009, often several times a year and as a result, have made friends there.

The people of the Mudgee district have seen terrible times over the past few years. Drought, bushfires and smoke damage to grape crops to name but some of the disasters that have been visited on the people and businesses in the area.

It has been brought to our attention from a recent farm stay holiday on the outskirts of Mudgee that this silver mine project has been proposed and I would like to submit our objections as visitors to Mudgee as we can see that no good, economically or socially, for Mudgee or NSW will be gained from this mine.

Pollution and environmental damage

According to information received, the mine will create two dumps, both to be sited above the water table of local waterways such as Lawsons Creek. These two waste dumps will remain there forever. These dumps will contain tonnes of chemicals, such as sodium cyanide which are toxic and hazardous to the environment.

No engineering design, construction and quality control will ever prevent or contain leakages. Once these leaks have been detected, they will be almost impossible to repair.

Australian mining companies not only in NSW, but elsewhere in the world have a history of failures in terms of environmental damage mitigation and pollution control.

Rio Tinto has an appalling history, for example in Spain, Brazil and Papua New Guinea. Here in NSW, mines have caused serious environmental problems. The Sunny Corner mine near Portland that ceased operations in 1922, continues to poison the surrounding countryside with acid mine drainage and heavy metal pollution. Near the ACT, the Captains Flat mine stopped operating 58 years ago and yet is still creating heavy metal pollution today despite attempts at rehabilitation. The Woodlawn mine at Tarago has polluted water flowing into Lake George with copper. Once Bowden Silver, as a corporation, ceases to operate, the company ceases to be legally responsible for the mine and any subsequent damage caused.

With this sad history, it is clear that the water quality of the Lawsons, Price and Hawkins Creeks are all potentially at great risk for hundreds of years to come.

This means that the people of NSW and the citizens of Mudgee will inherit the costs, economically, socially and environmentally of remediation and repairs, if at all possible, to this site.

CSIRO has ceased monitoring heavy metal pollution of inland waters from mining and the EPA is also failing to do this as well. This form of environmental damage will therefore go undetected for years. This lack of oversight in regards to water pollution should not be feasible or acceptable in 2020 Australia.

Economic benefits

The economics of this project are questionable.

The prices for silver quoted by the Bowdens feasibility study have not been reached in the past 5 years and if, over the years, the operating costs of the mine were to increase above the price quoted in the feasibility study, the economic benefits to the people of NSW would be zero.

The NSW government does have responsibility to protect our environment and its people and should not allow the creation of such a long-term liability such as this proposed silver mine to proceed.

Other issues

Other issues such as the effects of lead pollution from blasting to those living in the Lue area surrounding the mine and the damage to roads from mine trucks between Mudgee and Ulan should be investigated also.

Please do not inflict more damage to this magnificent area with the resultant environmental pollution by adding a silver mine to the mix.