

Submission Regarding Bowdens Silver Project

To whom this may concern,

The following document relates to the serious concerns I hold regarding the impact the Bowdens Silver Project will have on the residents of the Western Local Health District of New South Wales.

My name is Dr Imants Rubenis. I am a medical doctor currently undertaking specialist training in Internal Medicine and have seen first-hand the impact which mining can have on those who live in affected regions.

I grew up in the Upper Hunter Valley, an area which has among the highest rates of lung disease in New South Wales¹. This terrible statistic is largely attributed to the high burden of mining in the region.

I make note of your own submission regarding the baseline health characteristics of residents in the Western LHD². Of note, the residents of Western NSW are already at increased risk of respiratory system disease and cardiovascular disease when compared with the rest of NSW, being at increased risk of both hospitalisation and mortality².

Residents of regional NSW are already at a significant disadvantage in overall life expectancy when compared with those in metropolitan areas, on average living for five years less than city counterparts³. This is in part due to poor access to specialist health services, such as those which are required to treat chronic lung disease and cardiovascular disease which may be exacerbated by an increase in mining activity.

The risk of mining dust exacerbating chronic cardiovascular or respiratory disease is not the only health concern emanating from this project. Those exposed to mining dust are at risk of developing the serious condition of pneumoconiosis. This is an area of increasing concern across Australia, and as of 2019 is the subject of a Federal Government Taskforce⁴. The exact prevalence of this disease is only now being investigated and will become more clear in coming years.

In summary, the Bowdens Silver Project has the potential to exacerbate the both respiratory and cardiovascular disease in a Local Health District which is already demonstrating signs of health disadvantage. I strongly oppose it the project moving forward. I would be greatly concerned regarding the impact it will have on the local population in years to come.

Please note I do not donate to any political party.

Dr Imants Rubenis
BMed/MD, M Med (IM)(Adv.)

References

1. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/Publications/HNE-respi-cardio-disease.pdf>
2. <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-5765%2120200514T074715.843%20GMT>
3. http://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/Indicator/bod_lexbth/bod_lexbth_lhn_trend?filter1=ValueId=18413&LocationType=Local%20Health%20District&name=Life%20expectancy&code=lex
4. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/taskforce-to-tackle-silicosis-and-other-dust-diseases>

