

Re: State Significant Development No. 5765

Dear NSW department of planning, industry and environment,

I am writing this submission to register my objection to the Bowdens Silver open cut mine project near Lue. My partner has a farm in the Lue region that is known as Sunny Hill, 3146 Lue Road, Rylstone NSW 2849. I have had the distinct pleasure of visiting the farm and Lue numerous times to help with cattle management and offer up my labour.

The idea of an open cut mine within 3.6km of this farm, let alone the Lue township is extremely dissatisfying to me, and I believe it would detrimentally impact the natural environment, local businesses, and culture of the surrounding area. Given that harmful chemicals like sodium cyanide are to be stored at the mine, and will be present as an aqueous solution in the tailings facility, I am concerned at the possibility of a leak that would harm native vegetation. I also hold a concern that contaminated runoff with heavy metals such as lead will leak into the local surface water sources like Hawkins Creek. This is not unheard of in Australian silver mining operations. Take for instance the Texas silver mine in South Queensland that had this very problem in recent years, and almost contaminated the Murray Darling Basin. If a similar event were to occur, local water sources used to supply agricultural operations could be compromised by heavy metals.

I have seen the already limited water resources present at my partners farm in recent years during the drought. Although people usually assume a lack of feed is responsible for destocking, in the case of their operation it was limited access to surface water to fill their dams. Having read some sections of the EIS that note that local creeks can drop in water flow rate by 4.4% during operations, I am highly concerned for my partners farming operations, as well as any other surrounding primary producers that rely on surface water. Combining a drought with a mining operation that decreases inflow of water to the local system could be catastrophic for many established primary producers. In addition to this, taking groundwater from the local aquifer will permanently change the water equilibrium in the local area. With some agricultural bore levels predicted to drop by 2 meters, this is a significant amount of change in the water table.

As part of previous work, I have been situated in the Hunter region at Singleton. I know first hand that the light pollution (sky glow) that is created by mining operations can obfuscate what are usually very enjoyable views of the stars at night. Although this can be seen as a minor point, it is indicative of the cultural shift that mining has on quiet rural regions. The rustic appeal of the local area for agri-tourism will be impacted by routine day time blasting noise, heavy traffic, increased airborne dust concentrations and the daily drone of mining operations caused by vehicles and material processing. I believe that this mine will detract from the natural appeal of the Lue area, leading to business losses for the many bed and breakfast locations and other businesses. In addition to this, the loss of more than 350 hectares of natural vegetation, and the corresponding fauna will greatly devalue the biodiversity of the Lue region. I worry about the populations of the 13 different threatened species that will be impacted by the mine project.

The effect of this mine on the Lue township is also a concern of mine, in particular Lue Public School. Although Bowden's may be providing students with ipads. What use are these when students can't focus from loud blasts all day and increased traffic down Lue road. I understand that a new road will be built. Regardless of this, incidental traffic will increase through the town as workers commute to and from work, or to the pub and other businesses. The increased dust concentration in the air, as well as particulates created by burning fossil fuels in vehicles and processing is also a concern. I worry that the mine will potentially impact the respiratory health of those in the Lue township, especially the asthmatic, children, and elderly who are most susceptible to these risks. Anecdotally the Lue region is fairly windy, and I worry that particulates that are thrown into the air at the mine could carry easily into the Lue township, providing unexpectedly toxic conditions.

For these above reasons and many others, I object to the continuance of the Bowdens Silver mine near Lue.