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Name of application: McPhillamys Gold Mine Project

Application number SSD - 9505

**I OBJECT to the proposal**

### **REASONS FOR OBJECTION:**

#### **EFFECTS ON BELUBULA RIVER AND WATER RESOURCES**

- The dangers to the whole river system associated with any toxic spills into the Belubula River Headwaters that runs through the mine site and will be buried for several kms by the mine tailings. Downstream from the mine the river flows through the town of Blayney, rich alluvial flats grazing land, and into Carcoar Dam. Tablelands Water supply might be polluted via the planned pipeline connecting Lake Rowlands and Carcoar Dam. Below Carcoar Dam the Belubula passes through several rural communities, much grazing and cropping country and ultimately feeds into the Lachlan River west of Cowra.
- Possible disruption to adjacent groundwater supply by bores sunk on the mine site to provide water for construction and operation before the pipeline from Lithgow is operational. Regis until recently denied this was planned. In addition the rain that falls on the minesite will be harvested far beyond the 10% allowed to farmers, and will further reduce the presently available water in the Upper Belubula catchment.
- The plan to bring 13 000 000 litres of dirty saline water from Lithgow to the mine every day. This is water that Sydney does not want in Warragamba Dam, that has its origins in the degrading wetlands of the western Blue Mountains, that is polluted by being filtered through coal seams and by being used in a coal washery, and has its salt content multiplied by addition of brine, the waste product of a desalination plant at Mount Piper Power Station. The net result the introduction of a large volume of poor quality water and the supply of thousands of tonnes of salt to the already overburdened Murray - Darling Basin.

#### **EFFECTS ON THE 'NEAR NEIGHBOURS' OF THE MINE**

- The proposed mine would have a dramatic affect on the near neighbours of the mine especially, but not limited to, the settlement of Kings Plains that live on the south side of the valley facing the mine that occupies almost the entire opposite northern side. Here the open cut pit will be excavated and a large waste rock disposal area including a high embankment to be constructed over a period of four years. This will be a continuous source of noise, dust, and at night, light pollution during the life of the mine - after the first 6 months of construction on the site it is proposed that mining activity will proceed for ten years, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and fifty-two weeks a year, blasting permitted for 12 hours a day. For most what attracted the residents to settle in the area around what may now become an industrial void and dump mine

was the overall amenity of the area: the rural views that will be changed forever, the healthy environment that will be degraded, and the brilliant dark-sky to be gone for more than a decade. Some friends have already gone, bought about by the mine, producing patches of social isolation. Others may move away but some will not be able to afford to, after all the EIS states 'the financial burden of any decline in property values rests with the existing property owners.'

#### THE AFFECTS ON BLAYNEY TOWNSHIP

- Blayney town is sufficiently closed to experience the noise of blasting, the night -light and in adverse weather conditions dust from the mine including that from the tailings that are enriched in elements including arsenic, copper, sulphur, zinc, cadmium, and selenium.
- While the proponents of the mine speak of additional residents, business opportunities, employment, and additional rate income, what is to become of the plans for encouraging tourism? Will there be accommodation for tourists, will business be lost by the shops, cafes hotels and motels? Will tourists still want to come? Will the presence of a mine waste dump be a welcoming sign for those travelling along the eastern entry? And what of the cost of rents in Blayney, already short of such accommodation - will the less well - off be squeezed out by well-paid miners? Will local businesses lose skilled workers and potential apprentices for the same reason? The mine life is 10 years - what will happen then to the work force residents of Blayney? Will they find the employment for which they have developed skills and will businesses buoyed by contracts from the mine survive the inevitable mine-closure bust and will the Shire accommodate easily to the loss of rate income?

#### INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

- The planned McPhillamys gold mine is a good example of intergenerational inequity. The present generation reaps the benefit of the sale of the gold won whereas succeeding generations inherit a toxic tailings dam designed to leak into the headwaters of the Belubula River, and a pit that will leak water contaminated to a degree that it is unsuitable for cattle to drink into the groundwater reservoir and possibly to the Belubula River for hundreds of years. Additionally in the absence of any strategy to minimise greenhouse gas emissions from the site the miners will leave a legacy contributing to global climate change, principally global warming and increased extreme climatic events. The latter increase the possibility of high precipitation events with the risk of deep erosion of the engineered steep embankments and the catastrophic release of mobilised tailings and acid metalliferous drainage.

#### NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA

- Development of the mine site will lead to the destruction of 44 Ha of critically endangered Blakely's Red Gum - White Box - Yellow Box grassy woodland and the habitat of at least two colonies of squirrel gliders, and at least one koala colony. Both animals are listed as vulnerable. Threatened bird species reported include the Regent honey eater. The Kings Plains district has a very wide range of commoner bird species as well as kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, echidnas, frogs and reptiles. All such fauna will be to a degree displaced by destruction of habitat and the effects of noise, dust, night light, and destruction of potable water sources. Combined these indicate a risk to local biodiversity and a reason for rejecting the mine.

#### OTHER POTENTIAL LOSSES

- The development of the McPhillamys mine site necessarily involves the loss of productive agricultural land, some of this for permanently, for example the grassy woodland to be established on the site of the waste rock emplacement where grazing will not be possible. In a world short of food with a population estimated to grow within a couple of generations to in excess of 7 billion but no shortage of gold (over 40% is locked up in vaults) the morality of preferring gold mining over food production in a rich country like Australia must be questioned.

Signed

*Michael F. Burns*

Date

*19/10/19*