

The proposed McPhillamys Gold Project at Kings Plains is located in the wrong position for a mine with too many impacts on the long established rural and rural residential community in the immediate area as well as the greater Blayney community and region and should not proceed.

My family lives and farms on "Iralee" at Kings Plains, as an immediate neighbour of the proposed McPhillamys site. My parents live in a homestead built by my great grandfather 100 years ago and my family have been farmers and graziers on that land since at least the 1850s. Walkom Road on which they live, is named after my family. The ability for my parents to continue to live and work at their home would be seriously compromised by this mine – indeed, it is highly unlikely that they would be able to live with its impacts (something that some employees of the proponent have agreed they would not like to live next to). The future ability to continue my family heritage and the opportunity for me and my siblings to work and live on that land as the sixth generation - let alone our children – looks impossible with a mine such as this impacting on so many elements of my family's property.

There are a number of impacts that I would like to discuss from my perspective that I believe need to properly understood in the assessment of this project.

Heritage.

The Heritage report within the EIS rightly discusses Aboriginal and some European heritage within the impacted project area, before dismissing most of them out of hand. There is passing comment only made of local historical heritage listed items and that these "... are listed on the Blayney Shire Local Environment Plan (LEP) some km south of the project area. These include Lynfern [presume Linfern, also known as Springlawn], Iralee, Kareella [correct spelling Kareela] and Trendon Grange homesteads ... " (Appendix P Mine development Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage assessment 5.2.4, page 37). The Iralee and Kareela properties are both near neighbours of the proposed project area, and are both within about 1 km of the Pit area, hardly "some kilometres south". Any impact on these or any other heritage items within close proximity to the project area, let alone the keepers of these histories doesn't seem to have been considered within this report.

The heritage aspects of the Iralee property include both the homestead but also extend beyond this to the land that my family has farmed, not doubt modified and cared for, for generations. To me this land is personally very important, it informs my sense of place, has been one of few constants as a place that I have always been able to return to throughout my life and holds an emotional and spiritual significance. As I think of it and spend time there, I feel that I get some level of understanding of the Aboriginal importance of place and ties to land – an idea that I am sure that many others would dismiss and consider laughable for a white European woman. Nonetheless, I want to convey some of the idea of what it means both to me and my family. The EIS includes photo montages of the visual impact of the mine site from the front verandah of the Iralee house, which in itself is very confronting without the associated impact that would come with this from dust, noise, blast impact, as well as visual amenity. The view from the hill behind the house though is much, much worse. From there you would be able see beyond the façade of McPhillamy's hill that the proponent is talking about retaining in to the pit area. This is where as a young child, I used to walk with my grandmother to sit on the rocks and watch the district, including looking to the north of the Highway towards McPhillamy's hill and it is also where, my own son has played on the side of the hill amongst the rocks many times. This is but one example of how the proposed mine would impact on my family's ability to use this land in the future and is an attempt to explain the connection to place that we feel.

Water.

Water is one aspect of the mine development that it probably the most controversial and has gained the most media coverage and community angst throughout the development of the project to date. Water is a multi-faceted issue with impacts on the Belubula River, ground water and surface water all being raised and are real fears for local residents and the greater community. The greater Blayney community is well aware of issues around mining and water with well-known local examples including the flooding of the Browns Creek mine and the breaches of the tailings facility at Cadia. Any discussion with the employees of Regis or the experts that have been utilised in the EIS process leads to assurances that those issues won't happen with the McPhillamy's project and they will handle these things better than has been done elsewhere. At the same time there are assurances that any impact on things such as bore water are okay as there is monitoring in place and will be overcome by "make good" provisions. I have also been told and it is reflected in the EIS that there will not be any ground water impact outside of the mine site, without qualification. A Regis employee has also told me that if the springs at the head of Belubula are sealed, then as they are springs they will just come up elsewhere. At the same time, I am not aware of any assessment or modelling completed on the spring fed creek that runs through Iralea.

For all local landowners, farming operations depend on a combination of River, springs and bore water sources. Whilst I will leave it to others to assess the technical aspects of the claims of the water impacts for the proposed development, I do know that our water sources are reliant on very complex and interdependent underground systems which no one, including modern science, has a full and complete understanding of. What is the risk if these expert assessments are wrong? The impacts on both local neighbouring landholders for their agricultural production plus much wider impacts for the greater Lachlan River catchment could be devastating. The potential effects on the fragile water systems is I believe a risk too great to take.

Dust, Noise and Visual Amenity.

Dust impact on the residents to the south of the project site is considered inevitable, especially during the construction phase. The potential health impacts to residents is unclear, from respiratory associated impacts and again, whilst I have received assurances, the composition of this dust and therefore the possibility of even more significant health and disease impacts is also a real risk. Most of the local residents rely on the rooftop collection of rainwater for their drinking and household water needs. It is very unclear as to whether this water will be safe to use dependant on dust levels and composition. In a time where every drop of rainwater is precious, first flush solutions as a mitigant where there may only be a few mms of rainwater to collect in a weather event, would be far from sufficient. Again, the proponents talk about the monitoring that they are now (as baseline measures) and will continue to undertake as a management tool. Monitoring is not a mitigant, it is not solving a problem if it arises and it does not alleviate an impact that local residents would find intolerable but may or may not fit within arbitrary guideline or the proponents own view of what should be acceptable. Or indeed, some operation imperative that may override good neighbourly relations.

Some modification to the proposed project has already occurred as a result of the high forecast noise levels, especially in relation to the construction of the southern amenity bund which it is now proposed to take much longer to build as night time work would breach EPA noise levels. Even with a number of moderating elements and assumptions being made to the noise modelling, forecast

noise levels are above or at the higher end of acceptable levels. More data collection sites would be required to actually understand whether this modelling is correct as there are many localised factors as to how noise travels in the local area. The focus on this element seems to be on meeting arbitrary noise levels. The locality is currently a quiet rural area with intermittent noise. This is very different to living with continuous industrial noise day and night with blast noise to add further impact. This again would change the whole amenity of the area whilst ever the mine was in operation.

The visual impact montages contained within the EIS are very disturbing within themselves with significant changes to the land forms of the area, with lesser agricultural value in the final modified land forms than the undulating agricultural currently in place. These projected images don't show yellow goods machinery driving all over them, working on building these new landforms which I am sure will be part of the daily view and impact on the Kings Plains area for a number of years. European settlement within Australia has necessarily brought with it modified landscapes with various changes and "developments" over this time. The proposed obliteration of hills and creation of new hills and landforms is at a different level, one that distresses and saddens me beyond words that the proponent is prepared to change our landscape in such a dramatic way and also concerns me greatly for the impact on the agricultural and natural ecosystems of the area.

I have been told by the proponents that if dust levels or other impacts such as noise levels are too high, then work would stop or move to another part of the project site. I don't have any understanding of what real time independent oversight measures may be in place to ensure that this does occur – or will it be, on a practical level, a case of do now and seek forgiveness later. An outcome that would be basically untenable for residents. Measures of individual impacts do not take into consideration the cumulative impact on affected neighbours of either the overall project or at any particular point in time – ie at a particular stage of the project or driven by particular seasonal or meteorological events. The risk to this established rural community is great and the approval of this project is likely to lead to further dislocation of the community on top of that which has already occurred.

For the project site neighbours, it is very difficult to establish what impacts of the mine that they may or may not be able to live with. I know that this is something that my family, and my parents in particular, are struggling to grapple with. The hypothetical discussion of say, noise a couple of decibels above allowable limits for a period of time and offsetting this with a fountain to create a distraction of the sound of running water or similar is one thing, understanding the impact of this in practice all day, every day is something quite different. On the flip side, options for residents who cannot live next to an operating gold mine have already diminished. Land values and the ability to sell property with the uncertainty of a mine next door have already fallen. Regis employees refer to this as a reduced market for properties within the vicinity of the project area. The sale price of a property is arrived at with agreement between a willing seller and a willing buyer, with no willing buyers there is not a market for that property, full stop.

Current Community Impacts

Right now, prior to any approval and or commencement of works on the mine site there are already significant impacts within the community. This proposed project is causing significant stress and uncertainty amongst the impacted near neighbours and also disharmony within the Blayney community. The social media commentary has become nasty and is hurting a community which I

care about and enjoy living within. Near neighbours and other impacted residents are hurting and feeling isolated, the separation/divorce count amongst impacted neighbours is rising and – to my untrained eye – instances of severe stress and possible mental health impacts appear apparent. The uncertainty surrounding this project – the if, how and when – is impacting both short and long term personal and business decision making. In my experience and observation, farm management decision making is being deferred or avoided; important personal decision making is unable to happen or is ad hoc and; no longer term planning and decision making around things such as succession planning is able to occur. Peoples lives are being put on hold around the uncertainty provided by this project and the likely impacts on daily lives. This is not uncertainty that has only arisen in the past year or so however, has been going on for years for the impacted neighbours of the proposed project site.

Impacts and benefits of the McPhillamys project.

In my view there is a significant mismatch between the accumulation of benefits or opportunities and impacts of the project. The large majority of the impacts will be felt within the Blayney LGA. One of the benefits spruiked by many is employment opportunities that the project would bring. The EIS and the Social Impact Assessment contained within it focuses on benefits accruing within the region (ie Orange, Bathurst, Cabonne, Cowra and Blayney LGAs combined) such as “Local Hire” employment however, only a small percentage of those are forecast to reside in the Blayney LGA and of those the large majority already live in the Blayney LGA and would potentially churn from other employment (given the low unemployment rate in the Blayney LGA this is likely). This can impact the ability of other local businesses and service providers to find suitable employees, especially with an inability to compete against mine wages. By the forecasts within the SIA itself, there would not be a significant number of new jobs created for Blayney locals. Inward migration would also be expected to focus on Orange and Bathurst.

At the same time, outmigration has already begun from impacted landholders who have had their properties purchased. There has been already, and will continue to be, a loss of existing employment in agricultural related roles. As an example, my husband – in either current or previous roles – has worked as an agricultural contractor on a few of the properties that have been purchased by the proponent. On one property in particular, he worked on average 2-3 days per week last year, work that is now no longer there as operations have been wound back as a result of the acquisition by Regis.

Whilst the proponent has spoken of local content policies around procurement to ensure local benefit, how this work operate and the ability to work with local businesses and service providers participate given specific needs and scale is far from clear.

Whilst the above discussion is far from exhaustive - it does not for example, include the Tailings Facility, the quality of water from the Springvale mine pipeline, water ecology, the removal of remnant woodland, habitat destruction and fauna and flora impacts – these reasons are more than sufficient to explanation the significant impact of the proposed project on the local area and to demonstrate that this project is a mine in the wrong place.