

10th July 2020

TO: The Director, Resource Assessments,
Planning and Assessment Department,
of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022 NSW 2124

Bowdens Silver Project : App no. SSD-5765

I am making a submission objecting to the Bowdens Silver Mine Project at Lue, NSW

Thank you for this opportunity to express our objections.

My husband Mike and myself, have lived in The Badger Ground for a long time; Mike since 1971, and myself since 1988. As the crow flies, we live about 10 kms from the Lue Village, and east of the Mine site. We are nearer still to the land already severely impacted by the exploratory stage of the project.

We have over 130 hectares of land, mostly bushland, partially valley floor. A Conservation Agreement in partnership now with Biodiversity Trust (previously managed by National Parks). covers 95% of our land, which is mostly forested ridges and bushland, and partially valley floor.

Mike came to live here in 1971, and myself in 1988. We earned our livelihood by establishing a native plant nursery and collecting seeds. In retirement, we still collect seeds, as a minor income.

- **Water: We need to protect our underground water coffers. This is why:**

We have a remarkable spring which overflows and runs both over and underground along the valley floor, feeding wells and water holes along the way.

This spring enabled early settlers to live here, then in the 1920's and 30's to grow fruit and vegetables commercially for the region. Later it enabled ourselves to establish a thriving native plant Nursery, from 1988 to about 2006. We provided 30,000 seedlings per year for Landcare Groups, the endangered Regent Honey-eater Programme in Capertee, and rehabilitation of the Charbon Coal Mine. As we reached Pension age, we transferred gradually to collecting seed for both Rehabilitation projects around the region, and for The Australian Seed Company.

Our experience and knowledge of the conditions of land and the environment around this region have spanned over about five decades. Over time, Mike in particular has observed **changes in seasons, and the climate around here.** As seed collectors, we have lost the abundant yielding of seeds, as the blossoms get a set-back and lose their fertility with frosts, chaotic heat, unseasonal winds, or dryness at the wrong times. The same with the seeds of our vegetables and fruit trees as they lose their rhythm and fertility.

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As we are all aware, our seasons have been drier than usual :

Today, two of our three paddocks consist of 1/4/ luscious Pattersons Curse, ¼ rock fern. ¼ lichen and ¼ wispy, closely cropped native grass. Over the past two years we have piped spring water into the dam there but last summer the heat dried it up faster than we could keep it replenished. We also boost the house dam with piped spring water: it is just a shallow dam maintained as a fire fighting pool and a wildlife drinking pool.

The stringy-bark-scribbly gum flora on our ridges all look as though they have been burned in a bushfire, with leafless dead brown and black limbs. They have now started to sprout their epicormis shoots. It has not been fire causing this, but lack of water. The wildlife have eaten all the understorey and the bush looks thin and grey. What wasn't eaten, died through lack of water.

In addition, the fauna of this region has taken a beating. Our waterholes, wells and creeks do not flow as they used to. Dams are not filling up. Wombats, known for their ability to divine underground water, have dug a six-foot deep drinking- hole in the middle of Breakfast Creek , 50 metres upstream from the entrance to The Badger Ground. This hole has been kept up for a few years now. Only rarely has it been swamped with a flood of rain. And the cumbungi reeds in the creek never grew and flowered this last summer...the first time ever in our being here.

Breakfast Creek runs into Reedy Creek which runs into Lawson Creek.

This is a significant reflection on the long spans of dryness we have been experiencing in the last decade. Now that we are all facing a new ferocity of bushfire activity and a chaotic, warming-up climate, water is of paramount importance to our survival.

This last summer bushfire season, many people had none, or meagre water supply for dealing with bushfires.

Our region has significant ground water, and in these last few unusually hot summers, and dry winters, we as a community have to depend on them. We monitor our spring carefully, and never pull out more water than it can replenish immediately. Before Mike bought the land, the man-made pool was nearly lost due to land- clearing around it by previous owners.

I understand that Bowdens propose to use approx 2000 Megalites of water each year. The Mine will use water from the Lawson Creek valley. Lue town, like us, is fed by groundwater. The Mine proposes to use ground water from the mine pit, and Bowdens say they will reduce the water table by 25 metres on site. It will destroy the local water holes and springs.(The wells and waterholes in The Badger Ground dried up for many months and are only replenishing a little, and only when there is a good rain.)

We are extremely concerned that the Mine extracts water from the Lawson Valley areas. Can it really do this without damaging the water table or draining the surface water? We really doubt it.

Equally disturbing is the proposal to build a 60 km pipeline from the Goulburn River to Lue, to boost the water supply at the Mine. I find this an appalling concept. Goulburn River needs every drop of water it still has for its own environment, and construction of the pipeline would necessitate destruction of a lot of land between there and Lue.

- **Wildlife: their habitat endangered:**

Our property is an informal Wildlife Sanctuary. When Mike first arrived here, fifty years ago, the property had been cleared in the course of growing of commercial vegetables on the flats: bushland was cleared to channel water off the slopes onto the gardens, and timber felled for cutting thousands of tomato stakes. And of course, the wildlife was not wanted.

Today we are a safe-haven for wildlife, and people come to research the wombats and enjoy seeing a myriad of fauna, especially the wombats, wallabies, lyre birds, and in more recent years, koalas. (The name Badger Ground was named by the pioneers) who decided that wombats behaved like English badgers, with all their burrows).

This Summer, we had a lovely koala who slept in the tree area of our chook run for nearly two months. This was the time of the extreme heat and drought and bushfires. We kept up a good water supply for it. About February 8th, we had our first burst of rain for months, and we actually saw the koala eating the wetted eucalypt leaves. That night it left the chook run permanently. I believe that the rain rehydrated the gum leaves and encouraged that koala and its mate to move into a fresh area. We still hear koalas calling nearby at night.

In the peak of the drought and bushfires we were daily handfeeding about 20 wild wombats and 40 red-neck wallabies and two swamp wallabies (a very shy species) and myriads of wild birds and other creatures. Our small house dam was housing about two dozen turtles, many of which had migrated up from the paddock dam where the water had dried up. These wild creatures were probably coming from long distances away.

The vital point is: our fauna relies on our water, the water we have on our property which is **totally reliant on the spring**. When the gully creeks dry up and the rain doesn't fall from the skies, we have always been able to depend on this spring. With its water we can top up the house dam, supply watering places for the wild life, grow our vegetables, generally give life to this area.

Koalas are an iconic animal and draw much attention and publicity. Their habitat is threatened every time land is cleared or exploited for mining. Our wild life moves long distances, some more able to do so than others. The wildlife around us has probably passed on to each other that this place, and adjacent properties nearer to Lue, are safe havens.

If Bowdens Silver Mine is approved, there would be a wave of impact both subtle and silent: habitat will be taken away and wildlife will wither or move in on other territories for feed and safety. This is not healthy for any of them.

There is now a call for Mines to explore our own property and the sandstone/pagoda country around us for coal (Rumker-Hawkins). We could be surrounded by mining activities? What will happen to the wildlife habitat, and the water? Squeezed to death on all sides?

- **Clear sky changed to clear noises and light glows:**

Here in our sheltered valley **we can hear:-**

- The bikes at the Lue Station Bike Track roar, a constant drone, about 10 kms away.
- Party music and can almost distinguish some of the words people are speaking, from 6 kms away. Sound travels.

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- Hear gears changing on trucks as they travel along the Bylong Valley Way, 6 kms away.
- We have heard some coal exploratory drilling at a neighbours place on the Bylong Valley Way about 4 kms away: at first I thought it was a bulldozer coming on to our place via an old dray track – an impossibility, yet possible, as it sounded so clear. As drilling noise continued 8 a.m.-5 p.m for three days, I can now understand the headache effect of very low drilling noises.

Noise travels acutely in these clear skies. The thought of daily noises from Bowdens is unbearable. It proposes to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. **To live really near the Mine site would surely make people ill.**

Glow. We can see:-

Here our skies are mostly protected from man-made glow, and the beauty of the clear stars is a treasure. However, to the north we do have a faint glow from the Ulan Mine area, and to the south we have a glow from Newcastle way.

We cannot bear to think that our night skies will be glazed with light.

The lead factor:-

To find out that 47% of Bowdens extraction will be toxic lead also appalls me. The mine has worked out that it will produce 95.000 tonnes of lead during its life time. The village is only 2 kms away. **I understand there is no safe level to the exposure of lead.** What does this mean for the children growing up in the area, and attending Lue School?

In conclusion, I want to say how much I hope that Bowdens Silver Mine does not continue seeking a go-ahead. If it is this bad for us here, 10 kms away, it will be a travesty for the Lue community, or whatever is left of it. It will also be another nail in the coffin for our beautiful Australian flora and fauna.

For ourselves, we will find no other place in which to live, and will live with the sadness of witnessing yet more of the demise of our natural world as our society keeps driven to want more and more material things.

I hope you will forgive me for writing such a long Objection. I trust you will have the patience to read it, and that your decisions about this Project will take on board the points I have tried to make.

Thank you.

Sue

Susan A. Ridmore