

1 Byron Avenue  
Ryde NSW 2112  
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Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY 2001

**Submission re McPhillamys Gold Mine, Blayney**

Dear People

As you can see from my address I don't live anywhere near the site of this proposed mine, but my sister, brother-in-law and their three children do. They are very distressed about the effect the proposed project will have on the surrounding area.

Having discussed the project with her and skimmed through the project overview online, I can well understand her distress. There are so many irresponsible aspects with this project it is difficult to know where to start, so I will concentrate on the most potentially damaging in the long term – the tailings dam.

The vast majority of Australia is in the grip of drought, claimed by some to be the most severe and widespread in recorded history. Most expert opinion is that, due to the now unavoidable climate change caused by global warming, such droughts are going to become the new normal. This will result in reduced rainfall, increased evaporation, and consequent scarcity of water for all purposes, including farming, on which we all depend for food production. Yet this project is seriously proposing to construct a tailings dam, full of potentially toxic sludge, on top of the headwaters of one of the few rivers in the country still in reasonable condition.

Tailings dams have been known to fail, with catastrophic consequences. Destroying this agricultural area for a 15 year project to extract gold at a concentration of perhaps 1.05gm/tonne, producing 60m+ tonnes of waste, and leaving a destroyed landscape and toxic legacy that will last forever just cannot be justified to produce a metal that will likely end up as jewellery, or be locked away as bullion.

No doubt the financiers and engineers who are promoting and designing this project are highly skilled, but the risks posed by this project are way out of proportion with the benefit to be gained for the country as a whole.

Some towns in NSW are about to run out of water. It is morally problematic to say the least that water has been turned into a commodity in this country rather than an essential resource to which everybody has a right and human and animal interests are considered higher than the profits of organisations. One would think, in the state of affairs in which we find ourselves, if we remove the jargon fog, there are simply two questions;

- Do such projects pose a tangible risk to people, communities and environments in the short and longer term, despite attempts at amelioration? There is no answer other than yes.
- Do such projects put profit of a business ahead of the needs of communities and environments? There is no answer other than yes.

If this mine is approved despite the above two questions, we can take that as a hint at our fate as a nation, and a pretty damning (pardon the pun) illustration of where we are at.

Specific major concerns that make this project unacceptable include...

- Inevitable contamination of the Belubula and Lachlan Rivers, due to seepage through groundwater flows from the tailings dam, with consequential loss of recreational opportunities at the Carcoar Dam
- Traffic problems caused by the continuous stream of heavy vehicles, and light vehicles at shift changes
- The blot on the landscape caused by the “amenity bunds” and dust
- Loss of natural land and environment for wildlife, and the impact of toxicity on surrounding wildlife
- Noise, dust, vibrations, particulate pollution from diesel fumes, light pollution and the risks posed by regular explosions
- Permanent degradation of prime agricultural land and scenery
- The high probability that the developer will not be willing or able to rehabilitate the site when the mine eventually becomes unviable, as has happened so many times in the history of mining
- The whole project proposes less than 1000 short term jobs. Other industries in this area, with support a more diversified and resilient economy including tourism, renewables and sustainable agriculture offer far more employment.

I refer the Committee to a recent submission made by NCOSS to the Inquiry on the Sustainability of Energy Supply and Resources in NSW. [This submission](#) proposed a series of principles, summarised below, through which resource and mining projects should be assessed that protect human health, wellbeing and, ultimately, lives:

- The climate crisis, mining industries and clean energy transitions are social justice issues. The costs to environment and the people in NSW, now and in the future, must be more heavily weighed against the limited and short term economic benefits the industry brings to the state.
- The necessary transition to sustainable and clean energy in NSW should be informed by the impact of both action and inaction on affected groups, such as low-income households, workers and communities.
- Regional plans should look to new and emerging sustainable industries and build on existing community strengths, mapping out pathways that lay the groundwork for future economies.
- Governments, businesses, the not-for-profit sector, and the community each have a role in responding to the climate crisis and transitioning to a clean economy. Community sector organisations must be supported to reduce their emissions, improve their resilience to better support vulnerable people, and engage in a just transition process.

With these principles in mind I urge you to reject this proposal in its entirety.

Yours sincerely

Jacquelyn Johnson