

The issues that most concern me

WATER

- We live in the driest, inhabited continent which is also severely affected by drought. If it goes ahead this mine will be built across the headwaters of the Belubula River. It will reduce the flow by 9% during its operation and limit the river's flow forever post mining.
- A 600 hectare surface area tailings dam full of mine waste and heavy metals will be placed right on the headwaters of the Belubula River. There will be the threat of possible contamination of Carcoar Dam and further downstream to the Lachlan River.
- 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 mine site will be harvested far beyond the 10% allowed to farmers, and will further reduce the presently available water in the Upper Belubula catchment.
- The water they propose to bring from Lithgow will be laden with heavy metals and a salty brine. This will be used to wet down roads, waste dumps etc, polluting soils, surface runoff and groundwater.
- Have the cumulative effects of mining on the Belubula River been adequately considered? Remember that the mine at Cadia can take 7205ML of water from the Belubula River and 4200ML from the Lachlan unregulated via Flyers Creek, Cadiangullong Creek, Rodds Creek and Cadia Creek – a small and obviously limited supply. Furthermore, cyanide still leaches into the Belubula at Junction reefs in a high enough concentration to ensure that public access to the river at the mine is denied. This mine closed decades ago! Yet, we are assured by Regis that cyanide is safe despite the fact that its use is banned in many countries around the world. There are better ways but cyanide is cheap.
- What we know as the Tank Stream before European settlement was the source of fresh water for the Gadigal people. It was the reason Arthur Phillip established the new colony at Bennelong Point in 1788. By 1828, it was too polluted to drink. We have learnt nothing in the subsequent 231 years about how precious water is in our landscape, in our spirituality and for our survival. This mine, if approved, would continue this incomprehensible destruction and pollution of yet another water source.
- While this study talks glibly about a 9% reduction in the Belubula River's flow it does not really convey what an impact that is on our current environment. If Burrendong dam was 4.5% lower it would be empty!!!! The assessment "panel" should proceed to Henry Street in Blayney to see for themselves what an unpleasant, stagnant body of water the river already is – even before mining has any further impact on it.

EFFECTS ON THE NEAR NEIGHBOURS

- The mine will destroy the Kings Plain community and turn residents into prisoners in their own homes. What Regis refers to as "sensitive receptors" are actually people.
- The proposed mine would have a dramatic effect 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.

EFFECTS ON BLAYNEY TOWNSHIP

- Blayney town is sufficiently close 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.
- On the mine's estimation 20 new residents "might" come to Blayney as a result of the mine. Many more will leave. The local apiarist alone employs forty people, which is about 66% of what the mine claims it will employ from Blayney.
- Regis has made itself out to be the local employment agency motivated, they make out, only by its desire to provide jobs and "save" this struggling community. However, the number of mining jobs is always overstated. This reached a farcical level at a local community meeting when a mine representative stated that over 1200 people would be employed at the mine and then, when pressed, admitting to only about 250 jobs post-construction. Remember the much publicized 10,000 Adani jobs – Senator Bridget MacKenzie now admits there are about 100 full-time jobs post-construction at Adani. Jobs are one of the very few bargaining chips that a mine can employ.
- There are numerous small to medium sized businesses in the area around the mine site which will be affected. Visitors will be reluctant to stay at AirBandB's near the mine: equine pursuits may no longer be possible; riding tuition will cease because of the danger of horses being frightened by blasting; horse breeding and agistment will be affected by blasting and toxic dust coating grass ingested by close grazing animals; honey and queen bee production will be damaged by the effects of dust; organic and experimental biodynamic farming tuition will cease because of pollution.
- This EIS has not considered the recently announced expansion at the Cadia gold mine. Hence, the modelling of the economic benefits to Blayney of this reckless Regis proposal is seriously flawed. The Cadia expansion will effectively ensure that almost no mining business will establish themselves in Blayney. Why would a business designed to support mining operations establish itself in Blayney when Orange would be close to both an established mine as well as a proposed mine. The economic modelling should be repeated to reflect the current situation.

REHABILITATION OF THE MINE SITE

- The reality of the "rehabilitation" of the site will be a permanently destroyed landscape including a hole in the ground over one kilometre across and half a kilometre deep – left for future generations to enjoy.

- Regis argue that they are only viable if they do not have to fill in their “void”. This is a complete abrogation of their responsibility. Surely, in 2019, this is not acceptable. Cadia tried the same stunt and, since the collapse of their tailings dam wall, filling the open-cut void now, amazingly, seems to be a cost-effective procedure.

DISCOVERY RIDGE

- In my opinion, Regis has been most disingenuous in its “consultation” with local people. No mention is made of Discovery Ridge in their publicity in the local area and yet, in their latest report to the ASX, they are now calling this a “Potential Satellite Open Pit”.

Considering that the McPhillamy’s project is designed to incorporate Discovery Ridge ore, it is a cynical exercise to not include this proposal in the EIS. Discovery Ridge will have serious consequences for the local area. Where will the water come from – probably another damaging cumulative effect on the Belubula and its tributaries. What about the use of the Mid-Western Highway as a haul road? What about the possible upgrading of the rail line to Mandurama and a 24/7 loading facility there?

To not include Discovery Ridge in this EIS is limited, narrow, tricky and a blatant attempt to avoid scrutiny. Plainly, this company intends to try to manipulate local government to its own ends. This does not pass the pub test!

EFFECTS ON NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA

- Development of the mine site will lead to the destruction of 44 Ha of critically endangered Blackley’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.

LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

- Because of this proposed mine there could be a significant loss of good quality, well-watered agricultural land in one of the “safest” regions for agriculture in the state. This mine would basically disrupt, poison and permanently damage agriculture. Ironically agriculture, in general, is moving towards a regenerative, responsible, sensitive and green future. Most of Australia is desert, semi-arid or marginal country. It is again incomprehensible that good farmland and good water supplies should be deliberately destroyed. When overseas investors buy in to Australian agriculture they obviously see something that planning bureaucrats fail to value.

INTERGENERATIONAL INEQUITY

- The planned McPhillamys gold mine is a good example of intergenerational inequity. The present generation will reap the benefit of the sale of the gold whereas succeeding generations will 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 tens or hundreds of years.
- Regis admits that it will take about 400 years for the void to reach equilibrium – that is nearly twice the period of white settlement in Australia – a truly scandalous desecration of the land.

It is worth remembering that this mining company is 70% overseas owned. Australians have repeatedly shown themselves to be motivated only by materialism and greed and to be willing to sell Australia's land, beauty and resources very cheaply. Why should this continue? Sooner or later the "big gas bottle" and the "big quarry" will be empty and we will be beggars in our own region.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you the following quote

"You do not seem to have noticed the queer relationship between man and earth in Australia – how he treated her as a harlot, frenziedly raping her for her wealth; wool, gold and wheat. No wonder his conscience is uneasy."

Manning Clark

Professor of History, A.N.U. 1964

