



HASTINGS BIRDWATCHERS INC

Submission by Hastings Birdwatchers on the Bowdens Silver Project

I am writing this submission on behalf of the Hastings Birdwatchers, a community group interested in birds and their conservation. We are an associated group of BirdLife Australia, which has over 145,000 members and supporters. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this mine proposal. We are concerned that this mine, should it go ahead, will contribute to the continuing decline of threatened bird and other animal species in Australia. Native birds are in trouble in Australia. The “State of Australia’s Birds Report 2015” (Birdlife Australia) highlights disturbing declines in many common species. Woodland birds are in even more trouble, with many of the once common ones listed as vulnerable to extinction. The recent drought and bushfires in Australia have undoubtedly pushed even more species on the trajectory towards extinction.

This mine, should it go ahead, would destroy over 380 hectares of native vegetation, including over 180 hectares of critically endangered box gum woodlands. There are 3 forms of this woodland in the proposed mine site. This is White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely’s Red Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grassland. Only 5% remains in good condition and it is listed as a Critically Endangered under the EPBC Act 1999. It should be obvious to all levels of governments that there should be no further clearing of these communities. Offsets still result in the net loss of this and other communities and planting can take over 100 years to replace the communities destroyed. The mine will destroy hollow bearing trees that are home to many native bird and mammal species. These hollows can take hundreds of years to develop. Many of our species may be extinct long before this.

The EIS details 14 threatened fauna species found on the proposed mine site. This includes many threatened species of birds listed under the EPBC Act 1999 and or the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. These are the Diamond Firetail, Brown Treecreeper, Speckled Warbler, Grey-crowned Babbler, Hooded Robin, Varied Sittella, Scarlet Robin, Barking Owl and Dusky Woodswallow. The Regent Honeyeater was not recorded during the short EIS surveys, but it is highly migratory and there are now very few left in the wild. The proposed mine site is good habitat for this critically endangered bird and should not be cleared. This site is also core koala habitat. Koala numbers in NSW were falling even before the recent fires and they could be extinct in NSW before 2050.

The proposed mine is also near the Capertee Valley where BirdLife Southern NSW, bird clubs and community groups have been planting trees for Regent Honeyeaters for nearly 30 years. It is also near Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). These KBAs are sites that contribute to the global persistence of biodiversity, including vital habitat for threatened plant and animal species in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. They are considered “Nature’s Hotspots”. This mine should not go ahead in such a sensitive and significant area. Apart from the threat to fauna and flora, it will contribute to the lowering of the water table, will

use a significant amount of water in an area prone to drought and have a tailings dam which could contaminate the local environment, as well as a cyanide processing plant. We ask that the government reject this proposal, it is in the wrong place and poses too much of a threat.

It is time for the government to listen to community voices calling for protection for the ecosystems that we rely on for our survival on this planet. The state government calls for submissions and many volunteer groups spend hours carefully reading and writing submissions. We ask for this submission to be carefully considered and the mine proposal to be rejected. The alternative is the increasing threat of extinctions of native species.

Regards

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