

BOWDENS SILVER - THE MINIMISE AND MITIGATE CONUNDRUM

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A toxic cloud with a not so silver lining.....

Many experts have submitted their findings and concerns, so it is obvious to the Department the myriad risks associated with this proposed Greenfield project. Not only for the periods of construction and mining but also for many years into the future.

The Department has listed conditions and requirements regarding Bowdens (and the Departments) potential responsibilities, in its attempts to assuage the public's very real concerns. To me, as I'm sure for many others, the major issue regarding this project is obviously its location. Maybe great for Bowdens and Silver Mines Limited, but extremely bad for the local and adjacent communities and potentially damaging for the local environment. With the attendant risks associated with lead mining, which both Bowden and the Department have noted are unavoidable, this project should not be allowed to proceed. Its closeness to the village of Lue and the surrounding businesses and activities, including agriculture, cattle farming, olive oil production, vineyards, the tourist industry and associated accommodation. All of which have developed over many years and have managed to co-exist in an area that has a limited water supply. A water supply upon which Bowdens would also be totally dependent, as their proposal for piping in water from an outlying coal mining enterprise has been denied.

The below random extracts, sourced from various documents related to the proposed project, are just a few examples of the awareness of the risks this project would present. In the DPE's 115 page State Significant Development Assessment Report, its referral to the IPC and the 43 page Development Consent, there are so many conditions and statements applied by the Department (and/or by Bowdens) to this proposal that continually state that, if however, should 'such and such' happen to occur, that would be detrimental to either the local community, social fabric, indigenous heritage, threatened species including human, the water source, bore water, groundwater or creek water, biodiversity, agriculture, in the event of flood, in the event of drought, blood lead level contingencies, etc, etc, etc.....the Company (Bowden) would be obliged to, or be able to, minimise, mitigate, manage, compensate, allow for.....on and on.

'In terms of the suitability of the site, the Department notes the target mineral source is physically fixed in location, which means there are fundamental limitations in avoiding impacts to the surrounding community.'

'The Department considers that the potential impacts can be largely minimised and mitigated and the project is approvable subject to the recommended conditions.'

If the Department is already stating that they consider 'potential' impacts **CAN** be 'minimised' or 'mitigated', why do they then go on to say the project is approvable **subject to** the recommended conditions? If this is not heading toward being a contradiction, I don't know what is.

What indeed do 'minimise' or 'mitigate' even mean here regarding toxicity, water, noise, dust, air quality, scope 1 and 2 of greenhouse gas emissions etc, etc? What are their qualitative or quantitative measures? Of course there are some related tables and figures but they could be seen as very abstract concepts. Where does it begin and where does it end? Amongst the contingency measures mentioned, many are obviously applicable after impact, when it will be too late.

'Best practice contemporary practices and mitigation measures'

Ummmmmmmmmm.....thinking about it, just give me a minute.

'Groundwater inflows into the open cut pit would cause drawdown of groundwater levels in the vicinity of the mine. One privately owned bore could potentially experience drawdown of greater than 2 mt, although this is considered unlikely because the bore is in a shallow aquifer that is not hydraulically connected. Nevertheless, the Department has recommended a condition requiring Bowden Silver to compensate the landowner if updated modeling indicates the bore will be impacted.'

The above landowner's cattle could potentially have no access to water.

Compensate, how? Pay money? Offer the landowner water from Bowdens own water licence from the small and occasionally dry Lawsons Creek?

How much water is actually allowable to Bowdens via their water licence?

What is a **compensatory water agreement**?

'Minimise the potential for acid mine drainage.'

Minimising is not avoiding.

'Minimise risks to the receiving environment and downstream water users.'

I repeat, minimising is not avoiding

'Manage any potential conflicts with Aboriginal heritage values.'

'The project would directly impact 25 Aboriginal heritage sights.'

Has the mentioned education program for Aboriginal youth regarding found heritage items been formulated in consultation with, and/or agreed to, by the local Aboriginal community? If so, will there be any gag orders applicable?

'There are no other mining operations immediately near the project and the Department is satisfied that the project has been designed in a manner that is compatible with, and would not adversely affect adjacent current or future mining-related activities.'

No other mining projects current or future need be concerned. Phew! No problems then.

What about the town of Lue and its primary school being just 2kms away?

'Construction of the development may be undertaken on Mondays to Fridays between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm and on Saturdays between the hours of 8:00 am and 1:00 pm'

'NSW Education has requested that impact works and activities be undertaken outside of school hours and that Lue Public School is notified in advance of activities that could cause high noise or vibration impacts on the school.'

How do you reconcile the above?

Will the students need to wear respirators?

Should the school build a bunker or a bomb shelter?

'Ensuring local families can continue to live and work in their community by prioritising locals for jobs and offering local training.'

All of a sudden, all of the local families and communities are going to automatically transition from agriculture, cattle, olive oil, vineyards, and tourist accommodation businesses, etc, etc, to be trained to work in a toxic lead mine? I doubt it.

What about the downriver communities regarding water quality?

What about the upriver communities and those to the east that will be impacted by the heavy metals carried in the dust when the winds blow in their direction?

'Continuation of support for community initiatives and organizations through our Community Investment Program, which has already invested over \$500,000 into the local community. Further investment in local education and training is a priority.'

A boasting **PR** initiative, otherwise called **buying a 'Social Licence'**, which indeed can be of benefit to 'local' communities well before the project has been either denied or approved.

Money Can be a vote winner and encourage positive submissions. How many families and property owners had to abandon their properties and livelihoods in the upper Bylong Valley on the back of such wonderful and generous offers by Kepco? All for a project that was ultimately denied. But not before some schools, museums and sporting facilities, etc, in the same regional council zone, but well away from the proposed mining areas, managed to benefit.

I often drive from Kandos to Mudgee via Lue, and have obviously noted the large amount of signage condemning the Bowden lead, zinc, silver (also cyanide and arsenic) mine proposal in front of most of the houses in Lue, and on the fences of surrounding properties for many kilometers around. There is not one sign in favor of the mine. Many of the signs have been there for a number of years, obviously indicating the extended period of time these locals would have been suffering from anxiety regarding this proposed project. This also reminds me of the **Kepco/Bylong Valley** fiasco.

The fact that so many potential risks are indicated and anticipated, says there is obviously a very high percentage of some, if not all, of the risks actually occurring. Therefore the project should not be allowed to proceed. There will actually be no room for contingencies to be applied, it will be too late, the damage will be done.

Ironically, due to the plethora of concerns and conditions mentioned, the Department has actually issued a report that I think should deny the mine from being approved by the IPC, as it is not the right location for such a project. They don't even see it. Maybe.

If allowed, this Greenfield mine may be just the beginning.

Some years ago in the Mudgee Guardian, Bowdens had published a full page advert espousing the fact that them there hills be full of silver, from Lue all around to behind Kandos. In their present application, they also allude to the possibility of extending the proposed mining area into the future. This would of course require a separate application.

'Bowdens Silver is the largest undeveloped silver deposit in Australia with substantial resources and a considerable body of high-quality technical work completed. The projects boast outstanding logistics for future mine development.'

The above is quoted from the website of **Silver Mines Limited**, the owner of the Bowdens Silver Project. Silver Mines Limited hold a vast number of mining tenements in the Mudgee region from above Gulgong around to Kandos, including present explorative drilling at the nearby Barabolar project, which is 10 kms north-west of Lue. Also, since last year, they have added the Southern Gold Zone, an additional target for silver and gold mining adjoining the so-called 'Bowdens silver deposit' beside Lue. An indication of potential forays into the future regarding the possible amounts of zinc, lead, silver, gold and other metals that could be theirs for the pickings.

In conclusion:

'We all love those early Permian Rylstone Volcanics overlying those Ordovician and Silurian formations.'

Leave them alone!

Yours sincerely,
Terry Burrows

, Kandos, 2848