

I am writing in support of the DPE's recommendation for the approval of the Bowdens Silver Project.

This is an unusual and rare silver deposit for Australia and is one of the world's largest undeveloped silver resources. There is a global shortage of silver, which is concerning given how crucial it is in the move to renewable energy, with it being a key component in solar panels and electric vehicles. Silver is also a crucial ingredient in technology (phones, computers etc) and also in medical technology.

The importance of lead and zinc, in the automobile industry in particular, is also hard to ignore.

As noted in the DPE's Assessment Report:

*"The Department also notes significance of the project's resource, the increasing focus on minerals mining with decreasing reliance on coal and fossil fuels in the mining and energy sector and the associated growing demand for raw metals (including silver and zinc) due to urbanisation, electrification, a range of technological development and transition to renewable energies."*

This mine would also help fill the void in terms of both employment as well as local, state and federal revenue.

I applaud the NSW government for their push on this front, with the implementation of the Critical & High Tech Metals Strategy, which is a sensible step in the right direction in playing our part in the global shift to renewables.

I agree fully with the statement in the DPE's assessment report:

*"Although silver is the metal with the highest economic value in the ore body, it occurs in association with other minerals, including lead and zinc, which are also valuable metals".*

Gold and some copper have also been discovered in the exploration process at Bowdens.

This highly concentrated body of minerals is too important to ignore and I find it hard to believe it wouldn't be extracted at some point in the near future, as the push towards decarbonisation becomes more urgent, the demand increases and the supply diminishes.

While ultimately some people don't want a mine, particularly on their doorstep, without more efficient ways to recycle these much needed minerals, we have little choice but to continue mining them to meet demand until we have a better solution. And if that is the case, then I personally would prefer we source these minerals within Australia where possible, where we have stringent processes and policies in place, political stability and the economic benefits can be realised within Australia, creating local jobs and supporting local businesses.

I grew up not far from the proposed mine site near Lue, attended Lue public school and am now a very proud Bowdens Silver employee. I am part of a very small team of kind, responsible, highly capable and warm, friendly individuals. I'm a little biased, but I believe Bowdens hires well, looks after their staff well, and we work well together as a team. Staff turnover is low as a result. The number of employees who voluntarily opted to speak at the IPC hearing and have submitted supportive submissions without being encouraged or pushed, I believe is testament to that.

The moral compass of Tony and all the staff and consultants at Bowdens is nothing short of impressive. If anyone is going to be taking it out of the ground here, I think you would be hard pressed to find a more trustworthy company and associated consultants and experts to do so with respect for the land and its surrounding landholders, and in an ethical, responsible and considerate manner.

Before being employed by Bowdens Silver and hearing second hand information, I assumed the company was a big corporate giant looking to swallow Lue and surrounds whole, purely for the money, which seriously concerned me. I soon realised early on in the job interview process that there was actually a genuine, approachable, highly experienced, and an ethical group of people behind the stereotype, who don't hesitate to hire the best of the best (without cost cutting) to make sure they are all personally confident in assuring the public and their staff, that this project is 100% worthwhile, will be carefully managed all the way through the mine life and beyond and will not pose any health risks to the community.

The company is predominantly made up of a very hands on group of geologists, field crew, environmental officers and farmers, who are fiercely protective of the land here at Bowdens. The team is determined to pull out this amazing resource of silver to fuel this renewables push, whilst passionately taking on the responsibility of being caretakers of the land and its inhabitants with pride.

The NSW government has extremely stringent restrictions on the use of the land, and the company is already fully invested in the rehabilitation of the mine site with a brilliant team of passionate environmental scientists/officers, already a long way down the path in terms of plans to preserve existing species of trees and plants etc and to help them to thrive. There is a nursery on site and a team dedicated to this preservation of biodiversity.

Over the entire process I have been so impressed with the genuine attempts of my colleagues, to address and mitigate the concerns of the community and as a team, adapt the plans accordingly. Bowdens has spent years finetuning the design of the proposed mine in consultation with the community and with absolute experts in the field on board, in order to have the least impact on the surrounding area. They deserve much more recognition for that, in particular the removal of the water pipeline and the associated changes, was a significant amendment and achievement in addressing water supply concerns amongst the community.

I have witnessed first hand the team's many attempts to communicate with the surrounding landholders and stakeholders each step of the way, providing open days, information sessions etc, presenting the data in a factual manner without bias and emotion. In that process I have seen many anxieties quickly alleviated, at least for those who are not too proud to ask the questions.

This project would provide enormous economic and social benefits to the surrounding towns & villages. In particular, Lue, Rylstone and Kandos will be huge beneficiaries, with employment and business benefits a certainty after years of high unemployment and tough business conditions since the closure of the Kandos cement works. This project would go a long way in helping the surrounding towns and villages to flourish and prosper. Some of the statistics mentioned by Tony McClure in his IPC presentation were alarming, and I believe this project has a unique ability to help alleviate those issues.

I am proud to be a part of a company who is already contributing to so many small businesses and organisations. As an example, it was lovely to see a Bowdens funded AED installed at Lue Public School this week. The Lue community now has 24hr access to this in case of emergency. The kids were even able to meet Greg, the yellow wiggles himself, the highlight of their week. I have an absolute soft spot for that amazing school and am proud to be a part of initiatives like this that support it.

I am confident the company has done an absolutely outstanding job over the past 6 or so years to find a fair balance between the potential economic and employment benefits and the natural and

completely understandable concerns and anxieties of surrounding landholders. This was rightly recognised by the DPE in their assessment report which states:

*"The Department has carefully considered all the issues raised throughout its assessment process, Bowdens Silver's responses to community concerns, and feedback from the government agencies. Based on this assessment, the Department considers that Bowdens Silver has designed the project in a way that would achieve a practicable balance between maximising resource recovery and minimising associated impacts on the surrounding landholders and the environment through best practice contemporary practices and mitigation measures".*

While I acknowledge that I don't have the technical expertise to comment on the specifics of the mine design, engineering etc., I believe all community concerns have been covered extensively and appropriately in the EIS documents, the DPE's assessment reports and the IPC hearing. I have met many of the consultants involved in the project and have fired zillions of questions their way in order to feel fully confident in this project. In particular Nick Warren and Paul Ryall of RW Corkery & Co have done an outstanding job of explaining complex concepts in a clear and comforting manner. I would highly recommend anyone concerned have a chat to them.

I did however watch all the presentations at the IPC hearing and read many submissions and have noted the enormous number of people still genuinely anxious and concerned about the lead risk. In my opinion they had failed to read the reports submitted as part of the EIS process by Bowdens, or in the very least, this paragraph in the DPE's assessment report:

*"Health impacts from lead was a particular concern expressed in submissions from local community members and the Department carefully considered the potential for the project to increase community exposure to lead and other metals. Metals are ubiquitous in the environment and people are commonly exposed to metals including lead in dust, soil, water and food. A human health risk assessment included in the environmental impact statement showed that the intake of any metal as a result of the project would be almost negligible."*

The lead concerns have been acknowledged, well documented and discussed in length at open days, information sessions and CCC meetings (minutes publicly available), and the concerns appear to have been mostly alleviated for those genuinely concerned and open to trusting the government processes, the Bowdens team and its team of highly reputable independent experts.

I poured through all the health assessment reports and also asked the question in my job interviews and then again to some of our independent consultants after I started at Bowdens. I will be at work on site every day so wanted to make sure there was definitely no health risk to worry about for myself or for my friends who still live in the area. The responses all provided immediate relief and comfort. I have full faith in this process and am now confident that for my colleagues and I, and the local community, there will be no associated health risk to ourselves or to our children.

My family also has a business heavily reliant on tourism in the region, so when I went searching for documentation on the impacts the mine could have on that, I easily found the Agricultural impact statement within the EIS online that states:

*"It is anticipated that no agricultural industries or infrastructure within the vicinity of the Mine Site would be adversely impacted by the Project. The closest commercial, non-livestock related operations occurring within the Lue district are East Ridge Olives, Rylstone Olive Press and Elephant Mountain Wines. These operations are respectively located approximately 2.6km, 5.3km and 3.8km from the mine site and are not likely to be adversely impacted upon as a result of the adoption of the proposed*

*mitigation measures discussed in section 6. In particular, it is noted that potential impacts to the above enterprises as a result of deposited dust (and any minor concentrations of heavy metals) are expected to be negligible given their significant distances from the Mine Site and the ability of the Project to comply with the relevant criteria at surrounding privately – owned residences. Given the above, it is considered very unlikely that the Project would adversely impact upon the organic certifications held by the Rylstone Olive Press”*

I suspect the members of the Mudgee Wine Association, of which my family is a part of, had they been presented with the unbiased facts or the DPE report, which included lines such as those below from the DPE assessment report, would have had their concerns quickly alleviated. The report says:

*“The Department has recommended conditions requiring Bowdens Silver to monitor metal concentrations in deposited dust at representative residences and to develop a trigger action response plan and contingency measures for elevated metal concentrations. The Department has also recommended conditions requiring Bowdens Silver to develop a blood lead level monitoring program and describe contingency measures in the event of increasing blood lead level trends.”*

Mudgee has become the top tourism town for 2 years running which was well documented in the IPC hearing. Important to note, Mudgee became an especially popular tourist destination when NSW's borders were shut as covid spread, and many people who would otherwise have been in Europe enjoying summer were instead sipping red wine huddled next to the fire at some of Mudgee's cellar doors. Mudgee is also host to some big league games at our very own Glen Willow stadium which draws crowds from far and wide.

If it wasn't for the financial contributions from Mudgee's coal mines to date, this town would not have the vast array of quality shops, cafes and restaurants still afloat due to the thousands of miners who continued to support them throughout covid. The funds that trickle into the town from the mines helps repair the potholes in roads, plant lovely trees in the streets, fund stadiums, remove rubbish from the gutters, install sculptures in its parks, build and maintain beautiful walking tracks etc. The tourists aren't just in Mudgee to see the cellar doors, they are also there to see the beautifully maintained buildings and parks, the bustling foody scene and the say hello to the happy, healthy and welcoming people of Mudgee, many of whom have since moved to Mudgee, fully aware of the current mines and their importance to the region.

While the proposed mine site might be very close to the village of Lue when looking at a map or as the crow flies, once on the ground it is obvious to me, and no doubt others, that there is a fairly major hill/mountain in between. The mine site is located on some fairly ordinary and rocky country and in my opinion this would be the best possible use for this land.

An important part of the Lue community is the Lue Pub. I know first hand the huge efforts the new pub owners have gone to in order to bring life back to the pub and attract more patrons with open arms, while providing local jobs and supporting local businesses, while still providing a major source of accommodation for the bike track nearby. The soon to be opened cafe will also be a welcome addition to the Lue village, and the first I can ever remember in the village. As a child there was only a general store left along with the pub, so in my view, the mine would only increase the amenities and services available in Lue. I would love to see it a thriving little community welcoming both locals and tourists, and providing even further jobs to the community, alleviating the commute to Mudgee for residents and providing them with milk, bread and the paper, a luxury not seen in Lue in decades. I was assured when I took the job at Bowdens that they had absolutely no intention of

letting Lue become the next Wollar, in fact their plans are quite the opposite and as they have publicly stated, they have every intention of helping it thrive. And I believe that entirely.

I also wholeheartedly agree with the argument aired in the hearing that the Lue Rd is already a dangerous road, particularly with the high volume of potholes which have been experienced of late with all the rain. On page 41 of the recommended conditions report though (Appendix 6), it is important to note the significant contribution Bowdens have agreed to contribute to the local roads, which I believe would make a significant difference to the current commute to Mudgee/Rylstone for the better.

In conclusion, I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to come back home to the area after my university studies and find employment where I am encouraged to continue my studies, and have been given an amazing opportunity to further my career, with my family close by. Bowdens have always encouraged me to put my family first in this process, and I have always been given the flexibility to help out with the family business which is not able to employ me fulltime, but is in need of some extra hands at times, particularly during harvest and busy tourism periods. As we grew up with many of those opposing the mine, I have put my family in a very tricky position making them somewhat stuck in the middle. When I took the job, I was told it would be social suicide, that I would never be forgiven by friends and that I should question my moral compass. This process has amplified that, and I am disappointed that I can't put my name to this submission (like many others) and risk the potential backlash against my family as a result. I have been saddened to see my colleagues being shamed in the community (often publicly) for having an opinion, myself included, in the last round of EIS submissions in particular that was evident. I am also saddened that this process allows for the rapid spreading of so much misinformation, the creation of so much anxiety, and the pressure to pick a side and the resultant division of the community. It has been a stressful time for all sides and I believe everyone is ready for that to come to an end.

I made a promise to myself when I started work at Bowdens, that if I saw anything in the slightest bit "dodgy", or saw anything that made me genuinely concerned for the surrounding property owners and friends, and the land that I grew up on and am seriously sentimental about, I would immediately resign. I am proud to say I have seen nothing of the type and I genuinely believe this mine going ahead is in the best interests of all parties

The DPE has addressed all community concerns raised in the IPC hearing and prior to that, they have outlined very stringent conditions that seek to manage those risks as outlined in their assessment report: *"The Department has recommended a strict and precautionary set of conditions in consultation with the key NSW Government agencies and has taken their advice into account in finalising the recommended conditions. The recommended conditions of consent would ensure that the project complies with contemporary criteria and standards, and that residual impacts are effectively minimised, managed and/or offset to achieve an acceptable level of environmental and social performance. The Department considers that the project would result in considerable economic benefits to the region and to the State of NSW through employment (up to 131 construction and up to 210 operational jobs) and royalties. On balance, the Department considers that the benefits of the project outweigh its residual costs and that the project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to strict conditions of consent"*

I believe the DPE has correctly assessed this project and I fully support its recommendation. This is a personal submission, these are entirely my own words and my own opinion and in no way have I been pressured into submitting this.