

Premier Bob Carr
Premier's Department
GPO Box 5341
Sydney, NSW 2001

Dear Premier Carr,

I'm writing to you to express my support for "Mining Amendment (Cyanide Leaching) Bill 2004" which is being brought to Parliament as a matter of urgency on October 19, 2004.

Cyanide is lethal. Its use in gold mining puts humans, precious waterways, flora and fauna seriously at risk as leaks and spills from mines are frequent. Since the year 2000, dozens of incidences involving cyanide leaks and spills have been reported worldwide sometimes wiping out entire river systems as in the case of the Tisza and Danube Rivers in Romania and Hungary.

In Northern NSW at the Timbarra gold mine (2001), there were overflows from the wastewater ponds into the surrounding creeks on a number of occasions; this despite the mine being touted by government officials as a world's best practice mine. These spillages would have been disastrous were it not for the fact that the mine was already inoperable.

Cyanide transport is also high risk. An estimated 6000 tonnes of cyanide per year will be transported from Queensland to the Lake Cowal gold mine. For at least 8 years, 25 tonnes of cyanide will be trucked to the site most days of the week. According to the NSW RTA, on average, 1 out of 10 trucks has an accident each year. In February 2002, 400L of liquefied cyanide was spilled in the Northern Territory, killing 500 birds and other wildlife during transportation. A 10 percent probability of a cyanide-laden truck accident on the way to Lake Cowal is unacceptable.

While cyanide leaching is cost efficient, it is an extremely hazardous process. This is being increasingly recognised by governments around the world as they legislate to stop cyanide leach mining. In 1997, the Turkish Supreme Court restricted cyanide use in gold mining due to environmental and health concerns. In the US, the state of Montana has banned cyanide leach technology in gold and silver mining. Other countries which have enacted this prohibition include Germany, The Czech Republic, Costa Rica and various regions in the US, Argentina, Greece and Ecuador.

I urge you to support **Mining Amendment (Cyanide Leaching) Bill 2004** to ensure that we can protect the environment and communities from unnecessary risks such as the one posed by the Cowal Gold Project.

Sincerely,

Ben Grounds
Community Environmental Health Officer