

~~Working on Tables~~

To the Inquiry and Advisory Committee Members

I am forwarding this submission about the E.E.S. for the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project, which I strenuously oppose on a multitude of levels. In particular, I will be forwarding video and photographic evidence of the degraded state of the waters in the Gippsland Lakes. I have been visiting the Gippsland Lakes for over 50 years and have been a resident of Bairnsdale for the last 20 years.

Over this period as a visitor and resident I have enjoyed the Lakes and surrounds in a recreation and employment capacity. Alarm is probably too soft a term to describe the feeling I have experienced over the rapid decline in water quality of the Lakes. The use and misuse of one of the largest lake systems in the world has accelerated the degradation of water, land and habitat. At the present time we may have the opportunity to reverse some of this damage. With care and diligence, salinity, habitat restoration and water quality issues may be mitigated. Fresh water flow into the Gippsland Lakes system is paramount for the continued health of the system and has a flow on effect right across the board, recreational, industrial, agricultural and residential.

Kalbar, the proponents of the Fingerboard's project, initially estimated they would require 5 gigalitres of fresh water, now reduced to 3 gigalitres, to safely operate the mine. Even this volume of water (equivalent to the total usage of water by industry, agriculture and public use for domestic households) would put a great stress on an already stressed ecosystem. As yet, Kalbar still has not identified with clarity exactly where they will source this volume of fresh water from. The main source still seems to be the Mitchell River during "high flow periods". On this point alone, the E.E.S. document fails to address one major, critical point. That point is that it may only be possible to harvest the 3 gigalitre volume required once in a three to five year period. My question still remains the same. Will Kalbar be able to operate safely if they cannot access a sufficient supply of clean fresh water, albeit at the expense of the Lakes system, residents of Gippsland, industry and agriculture, how can they possibly have a storage large enough to safely operate?

I will be concentrating my presentation on water primarily as "Water is Life" and without a reliable source and supply of fresh water I and many others see a bleak future for the East Gippsland Region. To allow one entity, "Kalbar" to consume an equivalent amount of such a precious life-sustaining resource is beyond the realms of decency in a modern "democratic" country such as Australia.

As a shortlist for my presentation, these subjects will be addressed and evidence will be available at the hearing.

my concerns

- ① • Health of the Gippsland Lakes System – past and present – and indeed the future with projections and modelling of a 3 gigalitre withdrawal of inflow.
- ② • Evidence of wildlife/habitat degradation due to salinity and blue green algae blooms over the last 5 years, as proven in the Murray Darling mismanagement disaster of 2019.
- ③ • E.P.A. guidelines to discharge rates allowed into the Lakes System during "certain weather events"
- ④ • Socio-economic statistics comparing the use of 3 gigalitres of water by Kalbar to alternative renewable, environmentally sustainable projects. *Farms would employ more.*
- ⑤ • Tourism statistics concerning the use of the Gippsland Lakes and surrounds should Kalbar's mine impact the system temporarily or only for 20 years.

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- ⑥ • Health issues that may be experienced due to the presence of the mine in regards to overuse of our precious freshwater resource. Inclusive is the right to clean potable water of a sustainable nature.

Gippsland is blessed with the Mitchell River which supplies the major urban areas in East Gippsland. Also, it must be noted that rainwater tanks and the Glenaladale water storage facility are in the immediate, possible dust-affected zone of the Kalbar project. Contaminated water equals sickness in the population, both town and country.

Thank you for the opportunity to tender my submission in brief. Hoping to be able to speak to these points with further evidence to substantiate my objection to the establishment of an open-cut mine at the Fingerboards.

Regards

Gregory Mace

On behalf of greg mace – landholder jones bay Mitchell river

Greggs property is perched between the Mitchell River and Jones Bay only a short distance to the Mitchell river Silt Jetties

Water is the most important local resource we have – almost everything we do here and everything we grow – rely's on water .. water is life .. and we should take it very seriously.

On the 17th December 2017 the great Victorian bike ride was in town .. there were severe weather warnings – It stated 'statewide deluge impending' and the last 2 days of the great Victorian bike ride were abandoned

The weather event does not eventuate

The EPA had issued a permit to discharge waste water from effluent ponds via mcloeds morass in the event of rain exceeding 300millimetres .. there was discharge .. we smelt and observed it for the next 2 weeks

Within 2 weeks of the discharge of this effluent conditions in the Mitchell river and Gippsland lakes had deteriorated quickly

Approximately 20,000 various species of birdlife evacuated the immediate area of the discharge – to this date .. almost 4 years later only a fraction of that number have returned

Sand crabs, sandworm and fishlife was decimated and also to this date are conspicuously absent in the previous numbers.

Show footage etc

My concerns – the EPA may issue a discharge permit to Kalbar with the same conditions – any threat of a deluge – and it could be open the floodgates – in line with other organisations that may be doing the same at the same time .. this could further lead to the demise of the environmental attributes of the Lakes system.

Kalbars intended consumption of anywhere between 3-6 gigalitres of water – who would know the actual figure ? could be stored in holding ponds or a series of dams

If these water holding structures are drained quickly in a flood threat or actual flood – it could catastrophic to the health of the river the silt jetties and the lakes system

As we stand at the moment the Lakes are under considerable pressure – we have a growing population taking more water for domestic uses .. we have more water being taken from the system by horticulture and farming – we have a pockmarked series of new dams right across the landscape – all constructed in the last 5-10 years – we will not know the true impacts of all this water extraction for many years to come

We have a continually dredged entrance at lakes which increases the amount of salt coming further and further up into the lakes system – this is a big enough concern as it is

All of these issues that we need to deal with now – and the issues that they may present ... and here we are discussing the merits of a mine .. that will suck more water out of the system that is already under pressure

Surely we are smarter and more diligent than this

Water is life - and the creeks and tributaries that feed into our major rivers and ultimately spill into our Gippsland Lakes need our protection now ... we certainly don't need or want to be adding another potential disastrous cocktail of shortsightedness to the mix

Water is life – and the Creeks , Rivers and Lakes system is our lifeblood