

Good afternoon Ladies & Gentlemen.

I am Anita Hallett. My husband and I run merino sheep on 1400 acres at Goon Nure, 20km SE of the Kalbar mine site.

We both work long hours running our business by ourselves.

We are parents & grandparents, and active members in many local voluntary groups. (CFA ... *Community Group* ... *Hall Committee* ... *LandCare work* ... *Primary & Secondary School committees and parent's groups* ... *various sporting groups* ...)

Like the vast majority of people speaking against this mine, we do NOT have the time, expertise or vast sums of money to employ & consult experts to argue our case.

For every person appearing before this Enquiry to argue against this mine, I believe there at least 200-300 people who are also deeply concerned about many issues.

Due to work and family commitments, most people do not have time to appear before this panel, many find it difficult to put on paper their concerns, while others are intimidated by the whole process and the David versus Goliath battle.

Since this mine was proposed we have had deep concerns about

- * where the water is coming from to operate this mine
- * the short and long term contamination of the environment through the water and land,
- * the serious health risks to people living and working in a wide area around this mine,
- * the destruction of such a vital vegetable growing industry
- * the destruction of other farming livelihoods and devaluation of the land
- * destruction of small local communities and their support networks.

OUR CONCERNS

1. Water

Farming in our area is TOTALLY reliant on access to good quality groundwater required for our livestock and domestic use.

This groundwater is from the Boisdale Aquifer, which is already over-subscribed.

This mine requires enormous quantities of water. Where is it all coming from??

2. Contamination through dust and from the tailings dam is inevitable

Both the Perry River and Mitchell Rivers are major rechargers for the Boisdale Aquifer.

It supplies 1,000s of people with their drinking water, as well as water for livestock.

Sole source of drinking water for the City of Sale, plus several other towns.

The Woodglen Reservoir, located 3.5km downwind from the mine site, stores water for domestic and irrigation purposes for the whole East Gippsland Shire.

Contamination of these rivers is inevitable from
leaching from the tailings dam (admitted in the EES)
by dust containing radioactive substances and silica
& by frequent flood events along the Mitchell River.

Any contamination of groundwater or surface water in this area means the end of farming here, and a serious health risk to many thousands of people drinking the water.

3. Disastrous Effects on Agricultural Industries

The vegetable industry in the Lindenow valley is a multimillion dollar industry, and a major primary and secondary employer.

The vegetable crops are grown next to, and irrigated from the Mitchell river.

Contamination is inevitable by dust blowing over the area, and from contaminated irrigation water.

Pickers work in open paddocks, and their health will be at risk by being exposed to contaminated dust blown on prevailing winds from the mine area.

In past bushfires well north of the mine site, we have had ash and whole burnt gum leaves fall on our land and the roof of our house, contaminating our water supply.

Prevailing winds from W, SW and NW will inevitably spread contaminated dust over vast areas causing contamination of pasture, and water in dams.

Quality of other products, eg. milk, beef, lamb, wool, grapes, fruit, grain and fodder crops, will also be adversely affected.

Will lose our "Clean, Green" Image.

There will be serious health effects, particularly long-term, of contaminated dust on people living and working in areas within at least 100 kilometre radius of the mine.

How can the Panel allow a project to go ahead that will have such serious and long-term consequences on public health, welfare of livestock, safety of our food, and welfare of wildlife and aquatic animals?

4. The Industrialisation of the landscape & Disruption to Local Communities

This area is zoned agricultural and lifestyle areas, NOT industrial.

The considerable noise, dust, traffic and light pollution will be present 24 / 7 days, 365 days a year. It never goes away.

Mine is too close to where many families live, farm, work and attend school and kindergarten, including my own family. It will be extremely stressful for local people who live and work in the area.

The initial increase in jobs while the mine is set up WON'T last.

Only a very small number of ongoing jobs. Specialists brought in from other areas.

The Panel needs to seek out a lot more detailed information from professional medical experts about the effects on people's health after short and long term exposure to radioactive substances and silica.

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5. The Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) Program & National Vendor Declarations (NVDS)

All livestock farmers are required to assess the Property Risks & Chemical Contamination issues of their farms when filling in their National Vendor Declarations. How can farmers correctly do this when mining companies do NOT have to disclose what chemicals they are using during the extraction process, or the exact mineral content in the dust blowing over farms?

How do farmers know if their pastures have been chemically contaminated by radioactive substances and silica particles?

If there is a comeback on the farmer for contamination, who pays?

What are the consequences for public health if a farmer unknowingly sells contaminated livestock, and the contaminated meat slips through into the food chain?

What are the consequences for our export markets if contaminated meat is sent overseas?

Who pays when there are Biosecurity breaches?

The Panel must address all these issues and advise the Government to have relevant legislation in place to protect farmers if the mineral sands mine is to go ahead.

6. The Victorian State Government has planning guidelines in place to preserve prime agricultural land.

Gippsland has some of the best agricultural land in Australia, and the vegetable industry in the Lindenow valley is a major producer of vegetables for both Victoria and interstate. The Government should not put at risk the water aquifers, the rivers and Gippsland Lakes system, the agricultural production and the liveability that are the hallmarks of country Victoria by allowing a short-term mineral sand mine that would have devastating long term effects on the health and welfare of local residents, and the extensive "clean green" produce that comes from this area.

Some of the best agricultural land in Victoria would be seriously put at risk if this mine is approved.

This is a serious conflict of interest by the Government.

7. Mental & Physical Health

The mental health issues associated with COVID are nothing compared with the mental & medical health issues faced by many people who are against this mine.

Unlike COVID, this has been going on for 7 years.

There are extremely high levels of stress, anxiety & feelings of helplessness experienced by people concerned about their families, their homes, their livelihoods, and their communities.

Many people have had to put on hold their lives, their plans for business expansion, & improvements to their homes and farms

People feel like their plight is ignored by politicians, who will not ever personally visit to listen to community concerns.

8. The Victorian Government, and this Inquiry and Advisory Panel have a Duty of Care to all the local community, and the millions of people we supply food to, to NOT contaminate food and water, and NOT increase public health risks, especially from cancer and lung disease caused by silica, by allowing this mineral sands mine to go ahead.

9. I would also like to ask the Panel these questions:-

Would you allow a mineral sands mine industrial development next door to where you live?

Would you want yourself and all your family to be continually exposed to contaminated dust and water?

Would you want your animals and your food and your water exposed to this contamination?

Would you want your livelihood, in some cases worth multimillion dollars, put at risk by this mine?

Would you want to be forced off your land and out of your home by such a development?

Do you want to be responsible for contamination of pristine rivers, vital groundwater supplies and the iconic Gippsland Lake system?