

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

166

Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Lucy Grace Rash

Organisation:

Affected property: [REDACTED] Fernbank VIC 3864 (family property)

Attachment 1: Lucy_Rash_-_EES_

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: Include as PDF attachment.

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

My name is Lucy Rash. In the context of the recently published EES, I write in submission against the proposed Kalbar Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project. I am a 31-year-old woman who grew up in Fernbank on a sheep property that has long been in my family (located at [REDACTED] Fernbank VIC 3864), in the locality of the proposed site. I am now a qualified Humanities/Geography teacher at one of Victoria's top schools with a deep, academically founded concern for this project's impacts. I am strongly opposed to the mine and what I believe will be its severe, irreparable and destructive impact on the environment and community.

The first item of principal concern to me and many of our community members is that the EES was not independently commissioned. Aside from the obvious concerns this raises about the accuracy of information provided, I wish to point out that as the holder of two conferred University degrees (Bachelor and Masters), academic rigour/honesty and true objectivity are deep within my blood and skillset. How an Effects Statement that is commissioned by the same operation that seeks to principally benefit financially from the project can be accepted as a) legitimate, b) accurate and c) authentic is beyond belief. I believe this should be of concern to all stakeholders, regardless of the nature of information presented in the Statement. I understand that Kalbar is required to produce an Effects Statement as the business with the principal interest in this project - however, I believe this also presents significant ethical and moral problems with assessing the authentic impacts of the project.

Secondly, I am deeply concerned about Kalbar's proposed access to precious public natural resources such as the Mitchell River, the local catchment areas and the ancient aquifer under my family's farm. These special resources and key flows are required by local producers, wildlife, and the general community and access is already heavily regulated for good reason. My family, and those around the area, has taken deep care of these ancient supplies for many years and I believe it is philosophically unacceptable for a private company to deteriorate this connection to and care of the land for financial benefit. I am aware that Kalbar has expressed it will require up to 3 gigalitres of water per year to operate the mine. When this isn't available from the Mitchell River due to diminished winter flows, then the mine will be able to access supplies from the aquifer. While aquifer supplies are not necessarily finite, they take many years to replenish. Of course, replenishment of the aquifer relies upon consistent rainfall in an area that has been affected by drought for many years. How can it be that the health of a river that already struggles to replenish can be entrusted to a private company whose interests are merely financial? Each year, I teach my students about the devastating, irreparable impacts of humans' intervening in natural water flows. To stand by and let this happen to my country is not something I will do.

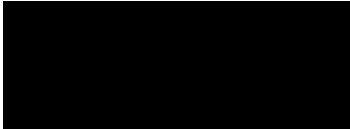
Thirdly, I am extremely concerned about the degradation of First Nations cultural heritage sites. Research has noted that unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are highly likely to be present at the mine site and therefore highly likely to be decimated. We saw the devastating impacts of such actions in the recent Rio Tinto explosion of Juukan Gorge. Given the excavation is set for approximately 45m into the earth, it will be impossible to avoid the destruction of these sites and artefacts. In fact, they will never have the opportunity to be unearthed/discovered in the first place. This is unacceptable, and an extremely worrying silencing of First Nations perspectives and heritage in our special area.

Finally, I believe that it is deeply unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of private land to be used by the mine for infrastructure (e.g. pumps, pipelines, roadworks etc.), land that is located outside the advertised mining project boundary. Why wasn't this a part of the advertised mine

project area? Why hasn't this been a matter for the East Gippsland Shire Council to interrogate and ultimately determine?

Ultimately, this is Gippsland's opportunity to say no to a prime example of destruction that is happening around our planet. This is also Gippsland's opportunity to set a globally leading example of how and why natural environments must be preserved, and at any cost.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I thank you for your consideration and I hope the most ethical, environmentally and socially conscious decision is made in the interest of our community.



Lucy Rash.