

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

199

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Glenda Blessie

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Submission_Glend

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

25 October 2020

Inquiry & Advisory Committee Panel Members

Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd - Sands Mining and Rare Earth Mining Project

Response to the Environment Effects Statement (EES)

Principally - East Gippsland Region (Glenaladale)

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee Members

This is a response to the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Rare Earth Mining project tabled to occur in East Gippsland (Glenaladale).

East Gippsland's river systems, lakes, mountains and caves have been a favourite destination for my family over the past 30 years.

The peace and tranquillity of the region, with its open spaces, premium produce, unique and outstanding attractions, alongside its welcoming community are some of the reasons why I have recently relocated from Melbourne to make Bairnsdale my permanent home.

According to *The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* referral by Kalbar to the Department of Environment and Energy Submission #2198:

EPBC Act Referral

<http://epbcnotices.environment.gov.au/entity/annotation/40e654e4-3e2e-e711-891f-005056ba00a7/a71d58ad-4cba-48b6-8dab-f3091fc31cd5?t=1587686400333%20>

Section 1.2 states:

"The Glenaladale deposit straddles East Gippsland Shire and Wellington Shire, however the project area is located entirely in East Gippsland Shire.....The Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project will mine approximately 10% of the Glenaladale deposit over 20 years.....It is envisaged that, **due to the size of the deposit, mining will continue in other areas of the deposit following the closure of the Fingerboards Mine.**"“Mining and haulage will be conducted 24/7, 365 days per year.”

I question what appears to be a statement of conflict.

Is the mining project entirely in the East Gippsland Shire or going beyond this..... **“due to the size of the deposit, mining will continue in other areas.....”?**

I am deeply concerned that :

Kalbar's mining venture clearly is aimed at extending its boundaries and objectives regardless of the identified environmental risks to fauna, waterways and wildlife identified as vulnerable or endangered.

The Kalbar project, as I understand, is a mining site, restricted to East Gippsland as stated in your EPBC Act referral section 1.2.

Section 1.15 states: Is this action part of a staged development (or a component of a larger project)?

The Response was “YES”.

It can be interpreted, and offered, that the impact extends beyond East Gippsland. Why do I say this? Simply, this mining project’s dependency on the Mitchell River and its connectivity to the Perry River Catchment and beyond, takes the mining risks beyond the Glenaladale community.

Section 2.3 states: Is the proposed action likely to impact on the ecological character of a Ramsar wetland?

The response was “YES”.

Section 2.3.1 Impact Table outlines “.....Potential impacts include alteration/degradation of water quality.....and the initial water requirements for construction and start-up are likely to be between 3 and 4 GL per year.”

This Wetland, located only 25km downstream from the mining area, which is part of our Gippsland Lakes system, has been identified as being at risk of “both groundwater and surface water discharged emanating from or passing through the project area.”

Kalbar’s mining project is profoundly located too close to our East Gippsland residents, community and pristine river and waterways, which support an infinite eco-biological system of vegetation and animal life. A system that creates the fertile land upon which our primary industries depend.

Can it truly be even considered as a viable position of any commercial venture?

Section 3.2 on hydrology states: “The Mitchell River system is the largest river system in Victoria that does not have a large on-stream dam, which has assisted to maintain its high environmental value..... The Mitchell River catchment falls under the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and is listed as a Heritage River under the Victorian *Heritage Rivers Act 1992*.”

I am perplexed:

In Kalbar’s EPBC Act referral #2198

The question at 2.3.2 states. Do you consider this impact to be significant?

The answer was “NO”.

Can Kalbar ignore that its practices will impact our river and lakes system, plus underground water tables with boring? Can this response ignore other sections of this same document, with its indicated risk factors?

The question at 2.13 states. Is the proposed action likely to impact on any part of the environment in the Commonwealth marine area?

The answer was “NO”.

Whilst mining is not directly on Crown land I seek clarification if the ‘run-off’, into the Mitchell River and other identified waterways, which is part of Australia’s waterways is in fact Commonwealth. When does water become the property of a Shire’s, a resident’s, Port of East Gippsland or Crown?

The continual nature and connectivity of Australia’s river systems is ultimately water that flows in the borders of Australia and out to the oceans and seas that are defined as part of Australia’s borders. The Commonwealth is Australia.

How can the listing of “a heritage river” be minimised or ignored?

Section 2 – Matters of National Environmental Significance.

The question at 2.2 states: Is the proposed action likely to impact on the values of any National Heritage places?

The response was “NO.”

Is this limited to land mass only?

The Mitchell River holds a heritage status. It is part of Australia’s territory landmark and consequently meets the descriptor of being a “national heritage place”. A river is ‘a place’ one goes to or visits, provides enjoyable recreational activities and supports marine and fauna life.

Is this a mistake or a misleading response by the parties who submitted this document? Regardless, I disagree with a “NO” response.

In my view these factors alone and the competition for valuable water resources are of significant importance for **opposing the Kalbar proposal** of a sand mine in the Gippsland area (Glenaladale) and the Wellington Shire.

Gippsland is extremely vulnerable during the summer, our drought and fire seasons. Available water resources are critical during this time. In fact, this water supply, particularly from the Mitchell River is always critical. It is the drinking water of many communities in East Gippsland.

Socioeconomic.

The Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 states:

”The purpose of this Act is to encourage mineral exploration and economically viable mining and extractive industries which make the best use of, and extract the value from, resources in a way that is **compatible with the economic, social and environmental objectives of the State.**”

“2A. Principles of sustainable development:

(1) It is the intention of **Parliament** that in the administration of this Act regard should be given to the principles of sustainable development.

(2) For the purposes of this Act, the principles of sustainable development are—

- (a) **community wellbeing and welfare should be enhanced** by following a path of economic development that **safeguards the welfare of future generations**;
- (b) there should be equity within and between **generations**;
- (c) **biological diversity should be protected and ecological integrity maintained**;
- (h) development should make a positive contribution to regional development and **respect the aspirations of the community and of Indigenous peoples**; ”

This mining venture, I question, is contrary to the spirit and intention of this legislation. I believe it will be placing the Gippsland community members at notable risks to their health and wellbeing due to the very nature of mining extractions and toxic waste.

How does this lead to providing the “pathway of economic development for future generations”?

The Gippsland community is still reeling emotionally, financially and their health compromised from the effects of drought, fires and Covid-19. The media is no longer reporting on the impact of these events and our community’s personal stories.

Many residents have been in the Glenaladale area for generations. The stress of having their properties disturbed, damaged, devalued and unsaleable because of mining operations on or nearby their own properties will have a direct devastating impact on their health and well-being for generations to come.

Consideration must be given to the aspirations of residents, the farming community, businesses, agriculture, horticulture, schools and community groups including the Gunaikurnai people.

They are people, sensitive receptors, human beings whose lives will be impacted by this mining project.

Cultural heritage:

Has the investigation by Kalbar been comprehensive and sensitive enough in regards to cultural heritage?

The Fingerboards EES Conclusion Chapter 13-12 states:

“All registered and recorded (known) Aboriginal cultural heritage sites located within the mining area will be impacted by the construction and operation of the project.....

Unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are highly likely to be present within the project area and infrastructure options area.

Predictive modelling indicates that the areas most likely to contain unknown Aboriginal sites are within the mining areas and the ancillary works and infrastructure areas.”

“The primary mitigation measure is the development and implementation of an approved cultural heritage management plan and **chance finds** protocol.”

It is forever lost, if we do not collectively, protect and restore these potential and identifiable heritage sites. Once destroyed by mining, as showcased in the Northern Territory Rio Tinto event, the history, the culture and the generational learning is lost.

When language and words such as “will be impacted”, “highly likely to be present” and “most likely to contain” are used, to my understanding, this indicates that the area identifies as a culturally significant site to the Aboriginal community, and highly valued as part of Australia’s heritage, leaving no doubt that it requires protection.

Release of Dust.

The Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project EES Chapter 13-10 states:

“Loss of produce value and access to markets due to damage to the region’s reputation for producing high quality produce.....Analysis of public perceptions and buying habits indicated that losses of value and income as a result of the project activities **is unlikely.**”

Dust, radiation and wind do not discriminate.

Consideration and a duty of care, not negligence, must be given to all the region’s employees, their families and the employees of the vegetable growers. Some of these employees come from overseas on the temporary Seasonal Worker Program or as temporary foreign workers, supplementing the local agricultural workforce.

If their (employees’) health is compromised who will provide the labour on these horticultural lands to meet the demands of the industry? If in fact, overseas seasonal workers develop significant health issues (eg. Cancer), what recourse will they have?

How will they, or any employee and employer support themselves and their families, with the health risk factors of open cut mining practices?

Noise and vibration.

In an already quiet and peaceful area the noise and vibration from movement of heavy mining trucks along the roads 24 hours a day 7 days a week will surely be amplified, generate noise fatigue that can induce stress and implode on quality of living/life.

Residents of this community have been in the region for generations or have made life choices to live in this serene, tranquil, beautiful environment so aptly promoted by the Shire of East Gippsland on it’s website.

[East Gippsland Shire Council: Home](https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/About_Us/Councils_Vision)

https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/About_Us/Councils_Vision

“**Its Vision:** East Gippsland is the most liveable region in Australia. A place of natural beauty, enviable lifestyles and opportunities.”

“**Its Mission:** A leading local government that works together with our communities to make East Gippsland the most liveable region in Australia.”

Let this be the opportunity to listen to the community of East Gippsland to maintain the beautiful natural environment for the benefit of this generation and future generations.

I thank you for considering my concerns in your decision-making process.

Yours sincerely

Glenda Blessie

Permanent Resident of Bairnsdale East Gippsland.