

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

201

Request to be heard?: No - but please email me a copy of the
Timetable and any Directions

Full Name: Denise Lamble

Organisation:

Affected property: [REDACTED]

Attachment 1: Submission_to_th

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: I am opposed to the development of the mineral sands mining venture at the
Fingerboards, Glenaladale. I have attached my written submission for your
consideration.

Dear Advisory and Committee Members,

I wish to write a submission in relation to the Environmental Effects Statement in relation to the proposed mineral sands mine at Glenaladale.

I am strongly opposed to the development of this mine.

I have grave concerns for the following reasons:

1. ENVIRONMENTAL: The proposed mine will be situated within 2 kms of the Mitchell River, the only wild and largest undammed river in Victoria. This river is a significant tributary of the Gippsland Lakes, a world heritage RAMSAR listed lake system which sustains a vast diversity of plant, fish, and animal life. These lakes are the largest inland waterway in Australia, and their only outlet to the sea is through a manmade entrance at Lakes Entrance, some 70 kms away from the proposed mine site. Contamination of these lakes and their fragile balance would be catastrophic to the biodiversity, recreational fishing and tourism industry.

This river supplies all the water for the fertile river flats at Lindenow, which produces a huge quantity of fresh vegetables and produce for markets all around Australia. This is a multi-million-dollar industry. Its produce is highly regarded in both quality and quantity and meets the highest standards for food production. The produce is sold through the large supermarket chains – Coles, Woolworths, Aldi, and IGA supermarkets, and also through the local outlets. Trucks transport this produce all over Australia. It is the main source of supply for Vegco, the cooperative company set up to be the main conduit for selling the local produce. This regional multi-million-dollar industry employs a significant number of local people, both skilled and unskilled. Threats to this industry would be very real if the mine were to go ahead.

The proposed mine would be directly above this fertile food bowl. The prevailing south-westerly winds would deposit potentially harmful minerals which have been mined.

I hear the argument that “sand is heavy and will not blow” – I ask, have you ever been to the beach on an extremely windy day? It is almost impossible to walk – your legs and eyes get peppered by the blowing sands. This area is noted for its strong winds, droughts, and flooding rains.

The potential for the run-off to infiltrate the Gippsland Lakes is enormous. The fragile river systems in this East Gippsland area are already under stress. The Tambo River is so silted up that it is unrecognisable from the river I knew in the 1970s. The recent catastrophic bushfires which ravaged this area have left the surrounding bushland, its flora and fauna, destroyed, and will take years to regenerate. The resultant damage to the soil, and resultant loss of topsoil has silted up the rivers Tambo, Nicholson, and Mitchell, not to mention the mighty Snowy River and Genoa River in Far East Gippsland.

To contemplate proposing open cut mining so close to the Mitchell River and its catchment, is irresponsible at best, and criminal at worst. The proximity to the chain of ponds system in the Perry River should also cause alarm and inadequate controls have been proposed to prevent inflows into this highly significant waterways.

The size of the area to be mined is large. The vegetation on this land is home to a vast number of birds, animals, and plants, some of which are only just being discovered and catalogued. To lose this amount of land, with its trees and vegetation, will potentially have significant negative impact on the local environment. No studies have been undertaken by the EES to map what types of flora and fauna are in this area *in situ*, and their potential unique part in our eco-system. The Gippsland Plains are 'critically endangered' and this is another example of incremental loss to this unique ecosystem.

Australia is one of the countries which is losing the greatest number of animals, birds and plants which are effectively facing extinction. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW THIS TO OCCUR IN OUR REGION, NOTED FOR ITS BEAUTY, BIODIVERSITY, CLEAN AIR AND UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO THE PLANET.

2. WATER: This mine will potentially use as much water as the entire township of Bairnsdale and surrounds, a population of some 20,000 people. This East Gippsland region has just suffered one of the worst droughts in memory. Stocking numbers were severely reduced from grazing properties, irrigators had their water allocations denied, the agricultural industry was on its knees. There was practically no water made available for the farmers. And yet, this mine will have water as its priority. Where will the water come from? I have it on good authority that it will come from the Mitchell River in East Gippsland Shire, and the river system in Wellington, encompassing the Avon and Perry Rivers. And potentially some underground aquifer water. Why, if this water is available all year round and in drought years, cannot this water be offered to the struggling farmers?

In relation to the water, how are they going to store it, and then what checks and balances will be in place to ensure that clean water is fed back into the river system? If it is full of heavy metal residue, how is that going to be measured? Who is going to be responsible for ensuring that the water is safe and not contaminated?

The climate in East Gippsland is notorious for droughts and floods. Most droughts end in floods. How is the mine going to ensure that when we have large volumes of flooding rains, that the dams will not overflow, and flood the low-lying river flats with contaminated silt and mining by product?

The Woodglen water storage is very close to the mine site, and the potential for that storage facility to be contaminated is huge. This facility feeds the water supply for Bairnsdale.

The latest CSIRO modelling (2020) under a medium and high emissions scenario predicts a 10% decline (median) in rainfall over the next 10 years, and we have already locked in a 1.5 degree C increase with predicted higher pan-evaporation rates. If droughts and increased drying will become more common, how will the mine operate with less water available? Does the EES does take into account the latest Mitchell River flood modelling at the new spatial scale, which predicts bigger floods?

Will the mining company be made to monitor and clean up any contaminated air, water or soil?

3. PUBLIC HEALTH: The mine is reported to be operational 24 hours a day 7 days a week, with convoys of heavy trucks removing the mined material to a processing enterprise off site. The local region of Lindenow, Glenaladale, Calulu, and surrounds has a settled and growing

population of residents. The noise pollution, and potential dust pollution, as well as the increased traffic and damage to the existing roads, will seriously impact the residents. Who wants their children to grow up breathing potentially harmful contaminants in the air? This area is noted for its peaceful and clean lifestyle.

4. CULTURAL HERITAGE: This area has strong cultural significance to the local Gunai Kurnai people. The mine site is so close to the culturally sensitive Den of Nargun in the Mitchell River National Park, a site of cultural significance. East Gippsland is littered with sights of massacres in days past. Hundreds of the local indigenous people were butchered in areas close to this mining site. We know better now and need to be sensitive to the wrongs of the past, and to try to encourage preservation of what cultural heritage remains from the local indigenous people. The Mitchell River was a hub and meeting place for tribes of people from all over the region, and so much of their history has been lost.

Please do not further destroy the lands and cultural heritage of these people by digging up the land. The land owns us, we do not own the land.

5. THE MINING COMPANY: I am most concerned that the mining company KALBAR mining, has no history of mining enterprises. I believe that the company has changed ownership several times within the last few years. I fear that they will sign off on all the required environmental and governance regulations, and then on-sell the company to foreign owners who will have no respect for anything except making money. Who will enforce these regulations? If the market for the minerals falls in value, the company have the right to leave it as is – called “care and maintenance” – until the price improves and the enterprise is deemed viable. This could take years. The environmental bonds are historically woefully inadequate for the work needed to restore and repair the land.

The company states they will restore the land to its former fertile state. However, in Western Victoria, where a similar enterprise was undertaken (granted by a different mining company), the photos the mining company showcased as revegetated and regenerated, were of land which the farmer himself undertook at considerable expense as the company did not make good their promise to repair the land at all.

It would appear to be grossly unfair that access to off site infrastructure can be compulsorily acquired by the mining company from existing landholders. What right of appeal do they have? Is this an area for the East Gippsland Shire to have some control over? How is the East Gippsland Shire going to address this? Does the company pay rates to the Shire? Will there be a rate reduction for the landowners whose land is acquired?

Who paid for the EES to be undertaken? With so much publicity given to corrupt business deals and reports which are produced by people and organisations with a vested interest in the outcomes, I would hope that this has been done by an impartial, well qualified body acting with integrity.

To allow the degradation of this land, so close to such environmentally sensitive areas, and such productive farming land, would be something I would be ashamed of for the world I will be handing on to my grandchildren.

I have lived in East Gippsland for the past 50 years and am proud to be a custodian of this beautiful part of Victoria, Australia and the planet, for a few short years of its very long life. Please do not make mistakes which will detrimentally impact the region for short-term monetary gain.

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to the EES consultation in relation to the proposed mineral sands mining venture at Glenaladale.

Yours sincerely,

DENISE LAMBLE