

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

369

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Raymond Stephenson

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: SUBMISSION_TO_

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

Mr Minister, I am sure when you started your working life you had a dream, maybe in Government, making monumental decisions that affect the lives of thousands. My wife and I had a dream – to live in and be part of a rural community, have children who have the privilege of enjoying open spaces and the freedom to choose their career paths and for us to be comfortable in passing on a heritage of hard work and appreciation of the land and all it has to offer.

Mr Minister, the dream started in the early 80's with the passing on of two paddocks at the Fingerboards. Both properties already second generation family holdings and part of a very solid community area, all farmers with varied skills and backgrounds, all part of the community – a thriving well adjusted community united by work and sport, eg football, tennis, horse riding, bush walking, kayaking, fishing, cricket – all activities which unite people and give a sense of belonging, yes belonging.

Mr Minister, with family commitment and hard work our dream continued to grow with the purchase of two more properties at our beloved Fingerboards. Our eldest son, having spent countless hours learning to and mastering horse riding, football, tennis and socializing in the community embarked on his great passion, Landcare. I often think if he had a middle name it would be Landcare. He says he has never worked a day in his life but his life 24/7 is caring for our properties and being a senior partner in the care of our larger region in Landcare and the future of all our rivers, lakes, bushland and farming communities. Our second son continues his dream, also on the land – farming, sheep breeding - having some of the finest lambs in the district - and always a mob of well-bred cattle in the mix, continuing with the community theme of having kids enjoying the countryside, riding motorbikes and learning how to work. Droughts, fires, poor commodity prices etc didn't stand a chance against the resilience of this community. The dream was alive.

3pm Sunday 14 February 2014 saw a fire, the ferocity of which no-one can recall the equal, rage across our landscape, raising houses and sheds, and many livestock were burnt. Every fence on our property was lost.

Mr Minister, before the smoke had cleared the Fingerboards community had rallied. There were locals, friends, workmates and strangers all pitching in, seeking out and humanely destroying injured and severely burnt animals, a job I couldn't do but had to be done. The follow up calls to people on their own, the delivery of a newspaper and a chat was always welcome when perusing the devastation. The community hall became the centre for regrowth and to provide company and a place for assistance if required - once again the community at work, working for one another.

Mr Minister, 2014 also saw the word Kalbar come on to the Landscape. They wanted to mine this area for valuable minerals with the only supposed collateral damage being “a few sheep farmers and a couple of bean growers on the flats”.

Not true, Mr Minister – which will be portrayed to you in many other submissions. In the last five or six years I have seen my personal dreams and aspirations of a united family and community turn to dust. Neighbours not speaking, roadside chats not happening, passers’ by not even acknowledging each other, local businesses being victimised for having a view different to someone else’s, attempted suicide, mental illness due to the mine’s proximity to their homes, the social media bashings of people living the nightmare in a previously normal country atmosphere.

Mr Minister, you certainly have the power of dreams to affect the lives of many thousands of people. I am only one person with a dream for a family and a community but please in your powerful position of making this mine a reality or not, spare a thought for my dream, my family, my community and the thousands of others who also share a similar dream.

VOTE NO - lives will heal.

VOTE YES - lives will be lost.

Have a nice dream Mr Minister, you’re a stakeholder.

Yours sincerely

Ray Stephenson

