

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 373

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**Request to be heard?:** Yes

**Full Name:** Vera Di Campli San Vito

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** Vera\_Di\_Campli\_E

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** See attached submission (Word.docx)

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing this submission in response to the Environmental Effects Statement for the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project.

I wholeheartedly oppose the mine and feel strongly that should the project go ahead, it would compromise the safety and wellbeing of our community and environment beyond acceptable limits.

I have lived in East Gippsland for seven years, moving from Melbourne in 2103 to live and work in W Tree. For the past two and a half years I have lived in Bruthen, approximately 60km east of Glenaladale. I regularly drive along the Bairnsdale-Dargo Rd to visit The Long Paddock in Lindenow, a high quality restaurant whose menu includes many locally grown ingredients, to go hiking in the Mitchell River National Park and surrounds, and to visit Dargo.

The whole of East Gippsland is special to me, from Lindenow to Mallacoota, from Lakes Entrance to the Cobberas. I feel very much at home here, and fortunate to live in such beautiful, diverse and unique surroundings, close to forests, mountains, rivers and the sea. Consequently, I feel very protective of the land, its fauna, flora, rivers, lakes, mountains, rocks, caves and other landscape features, and of its aboriginal cultural heritage, which dates back many thousands of years.

I am concerned about the wellbeing of my community, which has endured years of drought, followed by bushfires, floods, increasingly extreme weather events, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, on top of our every day problems and stresses. We need some peace, some respite from constant struggle. The last thing we want to be doing is defending ourselves against a corporation that has the potential to pollute, diminish and destroy our habitat.

Outlined below are only a few of the very many problems and risks associated with the Fingerboards mine project.

The mine poses numerous **health risks**. Many families live, farm and work very close to where the mine intends to operate.

The EES acknowledges that radioactive substances and rare-earths are being mined, but it does not include a full analysis of the ore body. Left undisturbed below ground, these substances do not pose a health risk. However, the dust generated when they are excavated and crushed **pollutes the air** we breathe, and *does* pose serious health risks.

Because we don't know what the laboratory was asked to analyse, the information in the ESS cannot be trusted. Please ensure that this information is fully disclosed and carefully examined so that we are all aware of the real risks involved.

I am concerned about this because it means we may face a future of increased lung disease and other respiratory diseases in the community. Surely the government and private corporations have a duty of care not to add to the cancer burden of the community? What about the children? Years of exposure to such contaminants can result in allergies and many other health problems.

The EES Summary Report states: "The project will result in emissions of dust and exhaust pollutants due to earthworks, wind erosion from bare ground and stockpiles, vehicle movements along unsealed roads and the use of on-site diesel generators."

The Lindenow Valley is a **food bowl**. Vegetables are grown mostly above ground and only 500m downwind from the mine. Dust travels far, so contamination and health risks are real concerns. The risks posed by dust means we may be eating contaminated vegetables, or the industry may be forced to shut down, which would result in huge job and financial losses for our region.

**Water** to irrigate the crops comes from the Mitchell River – heritage listed in 1992 – which is also the source of the Shire's drinking water. East Gippsland Water pumps water from the Mitchell River at Glenaladale to the Woodglen Storages, four kilometres downwind of the mine. What are the contamination risks, especially when the prevailing winds are westerlies? Those on tank water living near the mine are also at risk of water contamination.

The mine is located on the south-west side of the river on top of a plateau. Should the river become contaminated, it would in turn affect crops, fishing, agriculture, birdlife, the health of the Gippsland Lakes – a Ramsar-listed wetland – as well as our drinking

water. No amount of mitigation or compensation could appropriately address such a catastrophe.

Over 3 billion litres of water (3GL) is required by the mine annually for up to 15 years for processing and to control dust. Again, this shows how big a problem dust is. What will the impact of this be on bores, aquifers and the Mitchell River? According to irrigation data, if the 3GL of water was redirected to the horticulture industry, triple the amount of jobs could be created than proposed by the mine.

It is proposed that a tailings dam of 90 hectares (nearly one square kilometre) will be constructed to contain mine tailings waste and flocculants. The mine will be located on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell Rivers, and there is a stated risk of leaching from the dam, especially during a flood event. In such a case, tailings waste and flocculants could be released into the creeks and rivers, harming aquatic life and aquifers. The EES provides no details for the dam's construction, so there is no reassurance that it won't fail as so many others have (Benambra, for instance).

**Noise and vibrations** from a mine operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is stressful and untenable. Living very close to a major truck route, I know first hand how stressful the noise level and vibrations from this type of traffic is. I do not accept that it won't be a problem in the mine area and surrounds. The Shire Council's *Lindenow & District Community Plan* did not foresee a mine in this area. Government should recognise its history of residential and agricultural land use.

Income will inevitably be lost from **tourism**. People won't want to visit an ugly, toxic, noisy and dangerous area. East Gippsland Shire is home to nine national parks and two marine parks. Its temperate climate, inland lakes (Australia's largest navigable lake system), and extensive coastline, amongst other features, makes it a naturally unique and spectacular place. A significant part of our local economy is driven by tourism, agriculture, horticulture, fishing, and hospitality.

Known and unknown Aboriginal **cultural heritage** sites are present in the area. The EES Summary Report states: "All of the registered and recorded Aboriginal cultural heritage sites will be impacted through ground disturbance and the extraction of ore." Excavation down to 45m means that destruction of artefacts and cultural heritage will be impossible to avoid, despite Kalbar's mitigation measures. This is unacceptable.

One would imagine that there are lessons to be learnt in this regard, given the recent Rio Tinto iron ore mining debacle.

The planned mine area will cover almost 12 square kilometres, with a further 1.5 square kilometres for supporting infrastructure and facilities. Consequently, many **trees** and much **habitat** will be removed including over 700 large mature trees. Many flora and fauna species present in the area are listed as vulnerable, threatened or endangered. The EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area, so the full extent of what is at risk is unknown. This could mean more loss than reported in the EES. If destroyed, the landscape of the area could never be replaced. Offsets cannot compensate for this loss.

With regard to the Draft Planning Scheme Amendment (Attachment C), the **compulsory acquisition of private land** located outside the mining project boundary – to be used for infrastructure such as water pipelines, bore pumps, roadworks, powerlines, easements and rail sidings, and which will involve significant vegetation removal – is unacceptable. The Amendment states that “The facilities and infrastructure components of the project outside the mining licence area are subject to the requirements of the East Gippsland Planning Scheme. A number of these require planning permission or are prohibited.” If this is the case, then why isn’t it a matter for the East Gippsland Shire Council to determine instead of the Minister for Planning?

The Amendment document also states that it implements the following objectives of planning in Victoria:

- *To provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use, and development of land*
- *To provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity*
- *To balance the present and future interests of all Victorians*

I find this statement simultaneously laughable, insulting and offensive. I see nothing fair, orderly, economical, or sustainably useful in mining the area of Glenaladale. Such activity will do nothing to provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources, nor for the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity. As a born and bred Victorian, my view is that this project will, in the long term, sacrifice the health and safety and wellbeing of many Victorians for the short term gain of a few.

We can't predict all the potential and real dangers of this mine to human and animal health. It would be irresponsible of the Government to put the community at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Vera Di Campli San Vito

