

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 385

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Request to be heard?: No

**Full Name:** Jodie Dunkley

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** Fingerboards\_Sub

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** see attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project.

Our connection with the Fingerboards is personal. Our family (the Alexander's), have farmed in the area for generations and Megan Whateley is currently employed at Coonawarra Farm Resort. Thus far, Kalbar have demonstrated a lack of respect for the land in question, and toward those who live there

It seems obvious, that the mineral sands project represents a clear and present threat to the Mitchell River, the agriculture of the Mitchell valley and in turn the greater Gippsland Lakes into which the river flows. It will also destroy landmarks and sacred sites that are of importance to the Gunai/Kurnai, which I note in the company's report, is ascribed zero monetary value. Growing up in the area, the stories of the nearby Nargun (Den of Nargun) were how we learnt about Country through the eyes of our First Peoples, and to be able to visit and appreciate sacred indigenous sites in the Mitchell River Valley is a privilege that should be preserved.

It has been reported that Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd is proposing an expansive open-cut mineral sands mine at the Fingerboards, 20km NW of Bairnsdale in East Gippsland. It's dimensions are expected to be 13 square kms with a depth of 45 metres, on a plateau above the Mitchell River and the farms along the Mitchell River Valley. Kalbar's own geochemistry report lists a plethora of radioactive and carcinogenic compounds that will be present in the dust generated from the mine, which will take excessive amounts of water to try and control. (Over 3 billion litres of water annually for processing and dust suppression for 15 years). This is a significant freshwater flow lost to the entire Gippsland Lakes ecosystem. Furthermore, the mine will be metres from the river - to claim that no dangerous chemicals will leach into the Mitchell River is either naïve or disingenuous.

The mine's air quality and greenhouse gas assessment found that, in the worst case, the operation could create dust levels that exceeded air quality standards by up to 74 per cent. This not only puts Kalbar's 200 employees at risk, the 2,000 people employed in the valley in the food industry, and nearby residents, but also the greater community. With westward winds, the whole of Bairnsdale could be impacted. And this is on top of the poor air quality this region is exposed to during bushfire season. Earlier this year, Victorians were breathing the worst air in the world.

The mine is at cross-purposes with the Mitchell River Valley vegetable industry that employs up to 2,000 people, and is estimated to be worth \$155 million annually. It also destroys the Andrews Government's Target 1 million fisheries program. If tourists cannot eat seafood from the Gippsland lakes due to the possibility of it being contaminated by toxic substances from the mine, the millions spent on fish stocking, removal of commercial netting and habitat restoration works will be in vain. Melbourne is dependent on the Mitchell River Valley for 30-40% of it's fresh produce and as more people move toward plant based diets this can only be good news for the local industry.

One of Kalbar's key arguments is that new jobs that will be created in the area. From Kalbar's website, 1 mining job leads to 1 indirect job. Based on irrigation data, if the 3 billion litres of water Kalbar requires annually was redirected to growing vegetables, 3 times more

jobs could be created than Kalbar's proposal. These would be long-term sustainable jobs to grow food. According to National Farmers Federation statistics, every job created in agriculture leads to 4.2 indirect jobs.

Another industry directly impacted by this proposal is tourism. Nearby the proposed site, Coonawarra Farm Resort hosts 100's of schools and community groups at their camp. Many of whom return year after year and help fuel the local economy. People will be reluctant to attend a camp only 12 mins drive from the centre of the mine site, with the threat of carcinogenic dust exposure, and more than likely, noise pollution as well. Further downstream (or downwind, given the Mitchell River is only metres from the mine), there are potential serious impacts on tourism on the Ramsar protected Gippsland Lakes area. Tourism is the 3rd largest employer in East Gippsland and dependent on the Gippsland Lakes as a draw card.

The mine makes neither commercial nor moral sense. It comes at the inestimable cost of indigenous culture, the Mitchell River and Gippsland Lakes ecosystem, and the agriculture and tourism of the Region which has yet to fully manifest. 2020 has shown us what really matters in life. Allowing this mine to go ahead overrides the basic needs of human and animal health, and creates a few temporary jobs vs. many jobs with longer term security.

Do not allow this mine.

Sincerely,

The Crawford Family

Neil Crawford  
Lynette Crawford  
Jodie Dunkley  
Karen Crawford  
Megan Whateley