

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

594

Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Alexander Robert Blythman

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Fingerboard_Mine

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: As attached

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee Members.

I am writing this submission in relation to my extreme concerns regarding the Fingerboard mineral sands mine.

I am not a resident of the area, but have been a regular, frequent visitor to the region over the past 40 plus years. I have family and friends residing in the immediate, as well as, neighbouring areas. I, together with my wife (and when our children were younger with them), regularly stay for extended periods to access the amenities of the area, including boating/ fishing on the Gippsland Lakes, sightseeing of areas of historical and national importance such as the Den of Nargun, Mitchell National Park and up into Dargo and the high plains.

My concern with the proposal mainly cover areas of risk in the areas of:

Enviromental.

The proposed mine area is part of the catchment for the Perry and Mitchell rivers (which includes numerous creeks and natural watercourses such as Iguana, Moulin and Toms creeks) and subsequently the entire Gippsland Lakes system (a listed wetland). It would only take one, (I repeat one) episode of an environmental spill,(by water or airborne dust particles) to place the entire area,(bounded by Sale, Dargo and Lakes Entrance) at risk.

Some easily demonstrated sources of contamination would be;

- Below ground level are radioactive substances and other rare earths; whilst they remain undisturbed they do not create a health risk. When mined and crushed, dust is created dispersing those dangerous elements into the air and subsequently the surrounding lands and waterways.
- Full disclosure of the analysis of the ore body has not been disclosed. This is a very real risk, as not knowing the real dangers these consist to human, animal and flora health, a considered appraisal could not be provided.

- There will be a tailing dam of approx. 1 sq km in size of unknown depth containing mine tailings and dangerous flocculants (known to be harmful to aquatic life). The location of this dam will be on high ground above the Mitchell and Perry rivers. There is a **stated risk of leaching** and with the subsoil consisting of sand and river rock this is a very real concern. There are many examples of dam failures (e.g. Benambra) throughout Australia, so this is a real risk and **must be considered high**. With no details of the dam structure any decision could not be made showing the requisite Duty of Care to the people, agricultural and commercial interests of the area.
- The requirement for water of the mine for operational and dust suppression needs over the expected 15 year life of the mine is in excess of 3 billion litres annually. What effect will this usage be on the bores, aquifers and Mitchell and Perry rivers? When in drought where will the water requirement be sourced? Will it mean the withdrawal of water to the residential, agricultural and commercial interests of the entire area?

Health.

- Dust from the mine will travel vast distances on prevailing winds sending the dangerous by-products across large tracts of agricultural land, cities, townships and individual homes. How are these people to be protected from diseases such as , lung disease from the breathable silica, cancers from the radioactive particles or other disease caused by other components not disclosed by the E.E.S. The panel has a Duty of Care to the community for protection.
- Noise and illumination from the mine operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week will be untenable for the residents in the immediate area. The existing Lindenow and District Community Plan did not envisage a mine in the area, and as such, the Government must recognise and protect the existing residential and agricultural land use.
- The Woodglen reservoir is only 3.5 KMs downwind of the proposed mine providing domestic and commercial water to the entire Shire., One decent dust storm and there goes the entire Shire's drinking water. Added to this are the residents in the area relying on rain water for their use. What protection is in place to prevent these problems?

Financial.

- The mine is said to provide employment for up to 200 people. I'm not sure if this means full time or part time. However, to balance this out, consider the effect an environmental spill into the Mitchell/Perry rivers on the economy of the entire region. The vegetable/livestock/tourist industries would be devastated. The total employment in the vegetable industry alone would exceed that 200 figure, including farm labourers, drivers, packers, wholesalers, processors etc. Then consider what poisoned water would do for the residents of Lindenow, Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Lakes Entrance etc., including manufacturing and processing of all foodstuffs and other products requiring water usage.
- What effect will the mine have on tourism? Will people still be prepared to travel and holiday in the area with the knowledge they could be breathing in radioactive dust and carcinogens? Will they continue fishing or swimming in the contaminated waters of the Gippsland Lakes system? Even a small (say 20%) drop in tourism would be catastrophic for the tourism sector. I know I would end my trips.
- The water requirement of the mine transferred to the agricultural/horticultural sector would provide far in excess of the 200 jobs mentioned at the mine (even assuming those are full time). Irrigation data supports this suggestion.
- What capacity does Kalmar have to make full rehabilitation. The risk of NO rehabilitation is high with the track record of this industry. The previous owner of this mining lease unloaded the project because it was considered "not viable". If the mine is unviable what happens to the tailing dam, dams on the 19 creeks and watercourses, the mine itself, the invasive infrastructure that has been imposed on the residents of the area, and of major concern the ongoing suppression of dust escaping into the surrounding area.
- Why is compulsory acquisition of private land, to be used for infrastructure, that is located outside the project boundary being allowed. The positioning of dams, water pipelines, bores, pumps, roads, power lines, rail sidings etc should be integrated as part of the mine

project area. As presented this is a matter for only the East Gippsland Shire Council to determine.

Whilst the above are only some of my concerns regarding the proposal, I thank the Panel for the opportunity to place this submission and would like to close with my summation of the proposal.

Summation.

This proposal is a huge gamble. What is being gambled is the possible employment of up to 200 people against the very real risk of damage to environment and peoples of the entire East Gippsland Shire. The Panel has a very real Duty of Care to those existing residents and economic wellbeing of the Shire. I believe the only way that Duty of Care can be applied those peoples, is by opposition to the proposed mine.

With that result in mind I would look forward to again visiting the area, together with my adult children and young grandchildren.

Yours

Alexander Robert Blytman.