

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

693

Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Matthew Stephenson

Organisation:

Affected property: [REDACTED] Glenaladale

Attachment 1: EES_response.doc

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: "see attached submission"

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members

I write to you wearing several hats. All these hats interchange daily – and collectively, strongly oppose the proposed mineral sands mine at the Fingerboards, Glenaladale.

Hat 1. This hat is Hat number one with good reason. I am a family member of landholders at the Fingerboards. My parents own hundreds of hectares of the proposed mine footprint. We farm on the landscape and enjoy its natural values. We integrate the farming enterprise with conservation initiatives such as revegetation and farm forestry activities. From an agricultural perspective the main agricultural aspects are sheep and cattle production. The proposed mineral sands mine and its associated infrastructure will destroy those working and sustainable connections forever.

Hat 2. This hat is indelibly linked to the first. My family moved to the Fingerboards, Glenaladale region in the 1870s. We currently claim an 8th generation connection to that landscape, the broader community, and its natural and aesthetic values. Our immediate family are joined on that landscape by dozens of other family members that are all descended from the original settler families, and still farm and live at Glenaladale. You will find similar submissions arrive on your desk from these family members – all opposing the mine development – we are united on this front.

Hat 3. This hat is a third segue from the afore mentioned hats. I am a professional natural resource manager. I have been employed by Landcare for 20 years and developed my interest in this field of work growing up on the family farm at the Fingerboards. Since planting my first tree at age 6 – to now working for Landcare – I have always considered the farm a place where this connection between improving the natural and sustainable values of the land our family manage, and my professional learnings – could be intertwined. My Landcare learnings and experience over the last 20 years – do not align with the potential for a mineral sands mine at the farm – after careful dissection and interrogation of the proposed plan and the EES put forward - they significantly contradict those learnings.

Hat 4. This hat is attributed to community. During the period, this disturbing mine proposal has been present in our area I have strengthened relationships and connected with other people living and working in the Glenaladale area. Our united opposition to this proposal, coupled with the extensive experiences and varied backgrounds of these people, has encouraged me immensely. There are horticultural and dryland farmers, young families, retired professionals, extended family, people who live there and work in nearby towns and many others – all good people – all with a common purpose – to maintain the sustainable integrity of the area – whilst simultaneously working as a team to reject this unwelcome and irreparably damaging proposed mining venture. We have learned together, we have dissected and interrogated the information together – and we will continue to fight this misadventure by Kalbar together – until they move away from this community and its highly valued landscape.

You will hear from many people in the community about the obvious risk factors associated with this proposed misadventure by Kalbar. I will just provide a few of my concerns

- The placement of infrastructure such as roads, pipelines and workers stations on our farms is un-welcomed by us (the landholder) – but more importantly poorly planned. An example is the new proposed government shire road. It is tagged by the proponent to go through our property through bushland, across a narrow dam wall, and out through steep gullies to join the other road. Any local could choose a more appropriate pathway (2 properties down the road)
- The incursion of significant amounts of toxic and non-toxic dust emanating from our farm onto surrounding properties and the broader landscape is unacceptable. We value our neighbouring horticultural farmers. To envisage their crops being covered in dust – potentially ruining their production capacity and impacting on the health of them and their workers – is disturbing to consider.
- The theft of water by the mine proponent is concerning. The construction of 19 sediment traps (otherwise known as dams) on tributaries of the Mitchell River is unacceptable and environmentally dangerous, as is the pillaging of water from our underground aquifers. That water is required to nourish and sustain the natural values of the Mitchell River and the Gippsland Lakes system. We should be saving more water and allowing it to flow into these systems, not taking more of it for wasteful purposes – such as mines in inappropriate areas.
- The removal of significant vegetation by the proposed mine misadventure will cause immeasurable and damaging impacts to an already fragmented and modified environment. We need to retain existing paddock trees and natural vegetation and plant and protect much more – not destroy it – which is what will happen if this mine is approved.
- The significant impact this proposal will have on social and mental health complications will be immense. The fractured and divided families, the potential for self-harm and harm to others, the anxiety for those that have opposed and will oppose this venture through to their last days – you don't need to be a clinical psychologist, or even an adult, to recognize and acknowledge that this mine will upset a great number of people – and the consequences will be disturbing and far reaching. You do not need me to tell you that.

Frankly and directly. There is no longer any plausible way I can see this proposal by Kalbar being a successful one. In fact, I do not even believe Kalbar will run the operation – I think the controls will be handed to an overseas buyer within 2 years. Whilst I have little trust and faith in Kalbar's capacity to organise a chook raffle – I fear a foreign investor buying the rights to the mine off them – and fencing out the entire area, with no recourse for landholders to even attempt to get access back on to the crumbs of what remains of their land.

I am no expert in economics, but I am informed the proposal is not a sound economic venture. What little profits are derived from the project will quickly be absorbed by the cost of obliterating 200 year old trees and paying people to dig up and destroy ancient aquifers.

The cost to our family will be immeasurable. We will have to say goodbye to the farm and the dreams we had for any future involvement with it. It has been stated by friends and locals that they will just 'leave the area' .. how disturbing, that is not progress. The habitual aspects of my relationship with the land will cease. No longer will I be able to say, "Well today's been a bad day, I'll just jump in the car and head out to the farm, that'll fix my melancholy" .. because the sight that greets me will be the stuff of nightmares.

I have spent most of my life thinking and acting in ways that I believe will be to the betterment of that landscape. Planting trees, fencing off remnant vegetation and so forth. My brother and father have managed sheep and cattle on that land for many years and have also grown to love the landscape as it stands. Bulldozers and excavators, new roads and pipelines do not correlate with the vision we have collectively for that land – now – or into the future.

I recommend Kalbar Resources investigate the potential for mining ventures in areas they are both welcomed, and where they can provide a well-researched – well planned enterprise. That place is certainly not Glenaladale, overlooking the mighty Heritage listed Mitchell River and the Gippsland Lakes.



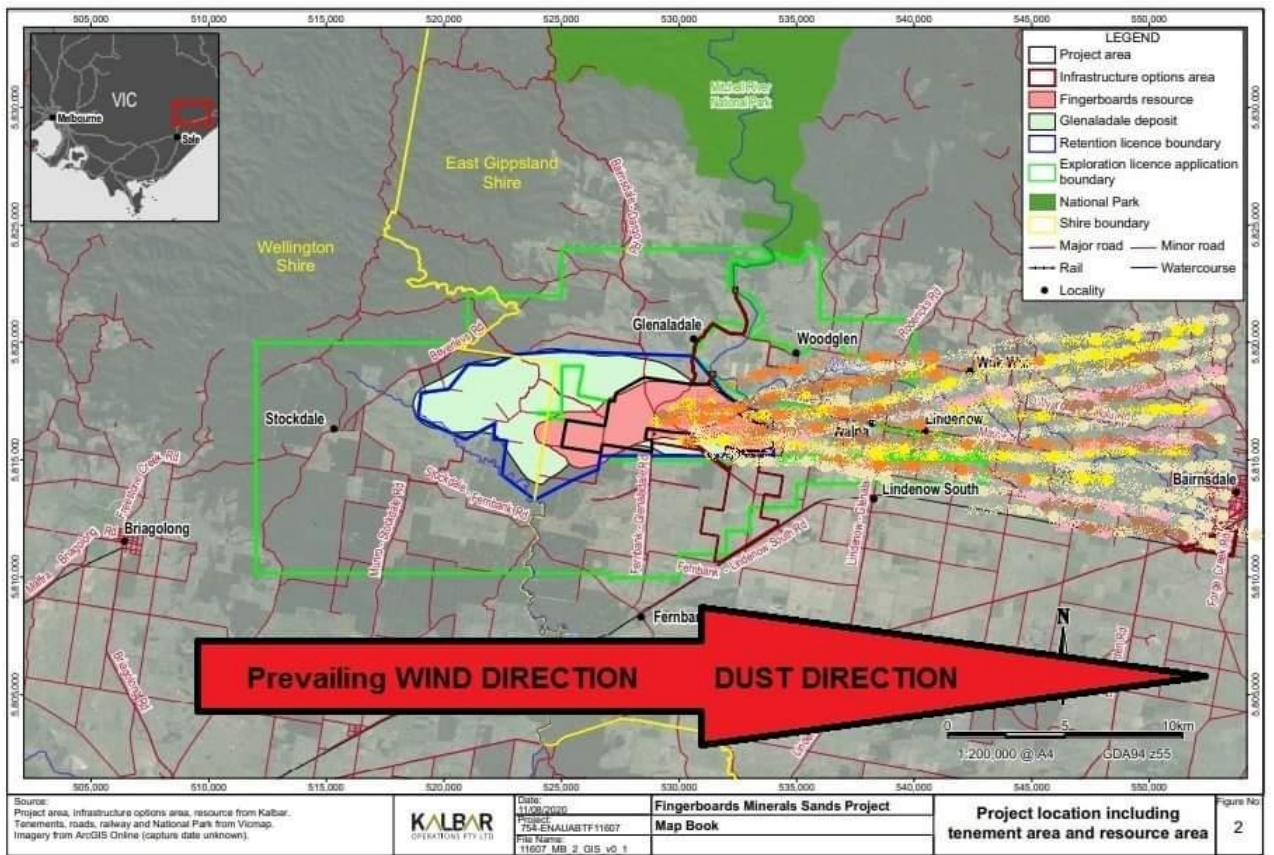
One of 700 mature trees Kalbar propose removing



Revegetation works undertaken over 20 years on the property will be destroyed by roads, pipelines, and the mine footprint.



Community values will be eroded by the Kalbar proposal. Over 85% of the community are in opposition to this mine proposal.



Dust and toxic material will become airborne after high wind events – contaminating our neighbours



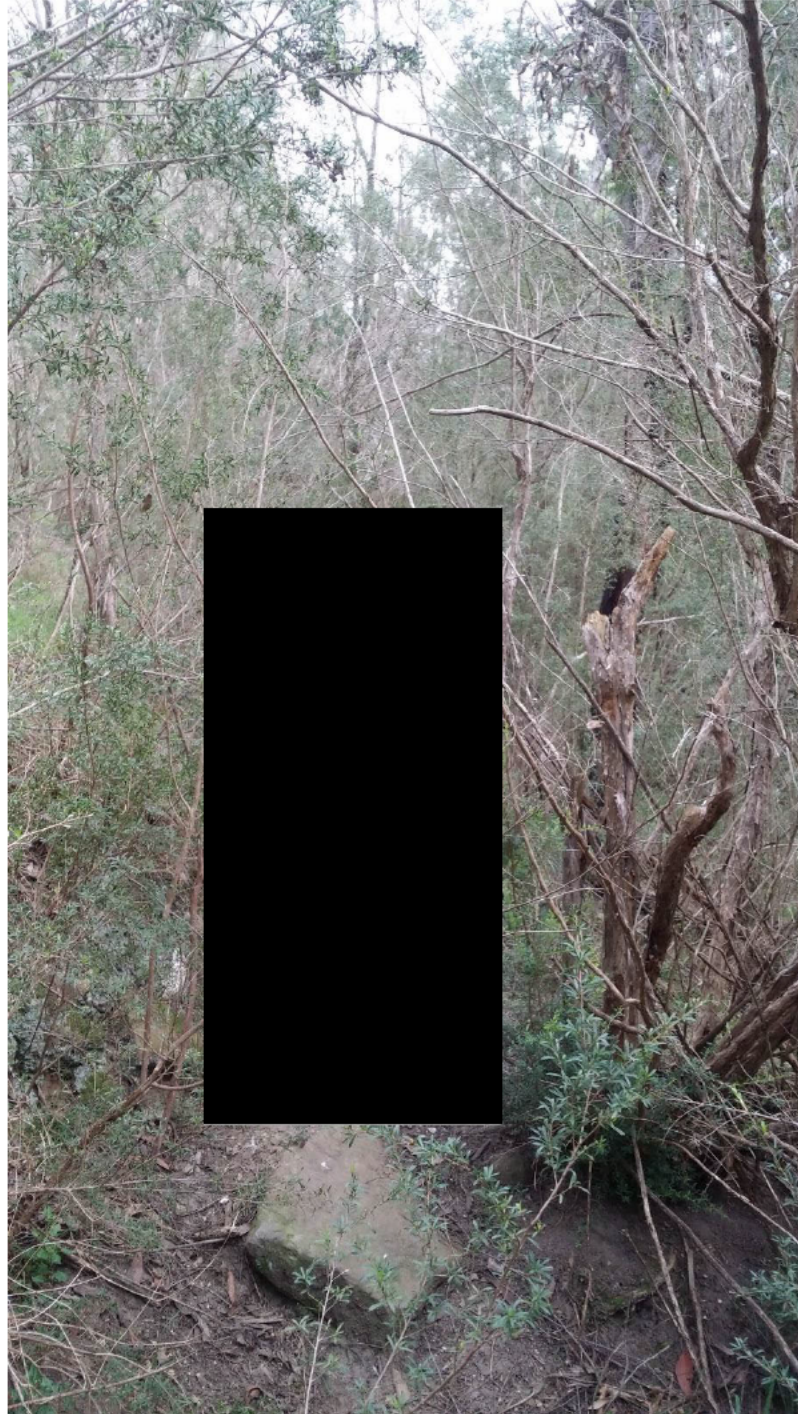
Our landscape will look like the Douglas Mine at Balmoral – only worse and on a larger scale



An 8-generation connection to this landscape will be fractured. This location is proposed to be cleared and a dam wall constructed.



Indigenous artifacts and cultural values will be destroyed during the lifetime of this project – Kalbar have acknowledged that.



Any dreams or aspirations that I held for my children and grandchildren enjoying the farm and its natural values will be lost. This mine will not conclude and be rehabilitated in 20 years – it will only get bigger – and for longer.

Whatever words Kalbar put down on paper now, regarding their plans will not be fulfilled - You can hold me to those closing comments

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to make a submission on this critical issue. Thankyou for reading.