

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

79

Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Joanna (Jo) Aquila

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: SUBMISSION_EES

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: I have lodged my submission electronically as a Word File. (docx) Refer to the Upload your submission/or supporting documents.

Date: Monday 19th October 2020 (Transmitted)

Attention: Inquiry & Advisory Committee Panel Members

Subject: Public Submission – October 2020
Response to the Environment Effects Statement (EES)
Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd – Sands Mining and Rare Earths Mining
East Gippsland Region (Glenaladale)

Author: Resident of East Gippsland for 22 years

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee Members

I am offering this document in response to the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands/Rare-Earth Mining project, tabled to occur in East Gippsland (Glenaladale). Whilst I am not contrary to mining as a right of entrepreneurial enterprise, that results in valuable contributions to our modern style of living, I am **strongly opposed to this specific mining project**.

As a health professional and educator, I have based my working life of over 40 years, on the value of historical facts, making decisions that genuinely remain inclusive of the nature of equity, in all matters. I advocate and support such professional and personal beliefs in my work and in my private life. I advocate and pursue the principles that no one body or individual holds the power and control, over another, due to status, resources, or influence. I reside in a reality that this however, too often, is the reality of life or living. I equally reside in the a truth of the importance of not giving up on these principles, as part of what upholds, such causes as United Nations, Charter of Human Rights, Bill of Rights, our legal justice system and a democracy, that must always be in pursuit of not silencing the disadvantaged, the under-resourced, the most vulnerable and the least able to represent themselves due to a lack of status or resources.

This submission is underpinned by my personal stance of living a life of principle. In essence, my principles are built on the platform that extend beyond *immediate or short-term gains*. When such a principle is compromised in any context, the result is compromising, if not jeopardizing, another persons' wellbeing, health, quality of life, survival, or enhancement to a secure life. A position too often the manifestation of inequitable balance of power, resources, and control.

This mining project stands contrary toward the human duty of care to always engage in activities that minimise or at best prevent the risk of **causing harm to others**. I am a strong advocate that everyone – as one, or as a collective, must uphold the principle of **cause no harm** and to make choices that ensure this outcome, regardless of personal pursuits and needs. No one body holds supreme righteousness above another.

This mining project holds significant concerns and risks of causing harm to others – immediately and into the future – due to the presence (and unvoiced support by those, likely to have protected it's constituents), of an enterprise that holds power and resources beyond the capacity of residents of East Gippsland and the voicelessness status for our wildlife and natural landscape – our environment and home.

My objections are in essence grounded in the inappropriateness of mining location – Glenaladale, East Gippsland.

This is simply not the right place for a mining venture. It is in the heart of a community. It is not a proposal outside in a desert, outback Australia (which I do not in any terms, suggest should be treated in any less manner) and of significant distance from thriving communities and dependable water systems.

I offer the following reasons for my opposition to this mining project. I trust that these will be honestly and sincerely considered, as I trust this process to deliver a result of no harm to any element of our fragile environment and in truth, community, that continues to recover from natural disasters. I trust consideration of these (and other submissions of concern) will consider current and future generations.

It is a human right not to be subjected to real, perceived or potential acts of harm.

In essence my reasons for objecting are grounded in:

- (a) **Health and wellbeing risks.** Community Members at risk of physical, psychological, financial, and social health. Environmental harm – impact on fauna, waterways and animal life. Concern based on the by-product of mining – specifically mining that has been acknowledged by Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd (KOPL), to be inclusive of producing ‘radioactive substances.’
- (b) **Proposed location** for the mining project for the community of East Gippsland Victorian – Australian citizens. **Environmental impact – particularly the Mitchell River.** Historical data affirms and supports that rehabilitation – as an inference of returning to a status of origin before disturbance – has historically, not always been successfully attained globally. It is well known of the impact of mining in such nations as New Guinea, Africa, India, China, USA and recently in Australia, with Rio Tinto in the Northern Territory.
- (c) **Risks to existing primary industries and the tourist industry** – employment, production, and market share. **Risk to the financial wellbeing of East Gippsland Community** and beyond as a derivative of the mining project.

My objections to this mining project are underpinned and framed upon two (2) critical and broader principles. These principles are:

- (a) that the EES is a document that resides in the arena of **a conflict of interest.** Whilst Mining companies are obliged to undertake EES processes and pay for them – concern remains as to the terms of reference, content and reality, that who is employed and funded by the Mining company, may hold spoken and unspoken loyalty to the organisation that is paying for the business transaction.

Can any EES document be truly independent within this systemic process?

- (b) the nature of risk. The EES document requires scrutiny. No investigation of this magnitude is or would be required, if there were no inherent risks of a significant level.

Principle 1: Conflict of Interest

I am deeply disturbed at the informed fact, that with the EES, is a funded and/or commissioned document, by KOPL. This intrinsically magnifies concerns regarding any assurances, minimisation, or capacity to address risks, when the data collated, collected and framed meets the criteria of a document that is deemed *not* to be *fully independent* in nature.

Ethical transparency of risks, genuine and independent inquiry, and investigation, in legal, if not, principle driven conduct, cannot be supported when there is any evidence and or concerns to the presentation of and status of *conflict of interest, that is in fact involving an exchange of money*.

It is my understanding that when regulations regarding matters that present a *conflict of interest* is evident, suspected, implicit or by implication, then the ethical outcome (often identified after the impact of conflict of interest cases) is (and should have been), for that *transaction* not be allowed to proceed.

Any mining project, or actions of one body, that may impact any other group, demands the authenticity of total independent inquiry and collation of data for the best calculated risk management in decision making.

It is a matter of such importance. I strongly believe this alone, is sufficient reason to heighten concerns on the content of the EES. Not as a reflection of the work undertaken by out-sourced agencies, personnel, and organisations, but simply, as not being a document without the possibility of **contamination and a status of conflict of interest**.

It is my understanding, that a duty of care resides to commence any (and this) investigation with an assurance of this basic and fundamental premise.

I press to state and impress that if the EES does in fact meet a workable definition of a conflict of interest that this would be an immediate outcome of this Inquiry and process.

Conflict of Interest, as I have been able to define, is inclusive of the following contextual meaning:

-When an action, or proposed action is identified and determined to result in as the *personal or financial gains above those whom they state to protect, serve or engage in the transaction; in its' real or implied presence*, is not a *true and honest representation for the benefit of all parties that are engaged or can be impacted by the transaction proceeding or has proceeded*.

Hence, in this instance the less powerful, resourced and represented community of East Gippsland – which is of significant proportions, are the ratepayers who seek a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

I offer this initial and fundamental principle on the grounds that I deem, respectfully, that this process in which I am participating in, is in fact, free of any conflicts of interests.

If the honourable members of this Inquiry are in agreement of this principle and it's scrutiny - I am requesting consideration of rejecting this EES and proceeding accordingly.

Principle 2: The intrinsic reality of risk.

The definition of risk or risk taking can be subjective, rather than objective. I looked for an accurate meaning for myself to ensure that I really do understand what I propose is a risk if this mining project should proceed.

I found the following meaning: (Sourced: Definition of Risk: www.bing.com)

As a noun it is described as “a situation involving exposure to danger” inclusive of additional descriptors as possibility, chance, likelihood, peril, threat, menace. The possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen; a person or thing regarded as likely to turn out well or badly in a particular context or respect.”

As a verb it is described as “expose (someone or something valued) to danger, harm or loss”. Additional descriptors included: an act in such a way as to bring about the possibility of (an unpleasant or unwelcome event); incur the chance of unfortunate consequences by engaging in (an action)”.

I am not persuaded that this mining project, presented by a company, which I have been informed by other sources, has limited experience in mining (but may seek outsourcing to overseas interests), is a project in which all supporters, are collectively engaged in the probability of ‘exposure to danger’, that holds ‘chance, likelihood, threat..that things may not turn out well...incurring the (real) change of unfortunate consequences by engaging in the action’.

East Gippsland is a region of natural disasters – fires and floods and inherent isolation that hampers recovery from economic loss – recently imploded by the Coronavirus pandemic. It cannot be placed at risk – *at a level of probability, chance, or likelihood*, with the identified risks it will bring to this region.

Objection 1: Health and wellbeing risks. Community Members are at risk of physical, psychological, financial, and social health. Environmental harm – impact on fauna, waterways, and animal life, are linked to human wellbeing – it’s water supply. Concern based on the by-product of mining – specifically mining that has been acknowledged by KOPL, to be inclusive of producing ‘radioactive substances.’

- KOPL has identified and affirmed that this project will produce and require the management of ‘dust’. Mineral sands and rare-earth mining are aligned with dust that is contaminated with radioactive particles’. Excavation and crushing processes, that will be occurring down

to 45metres, will be extracting radioactive particles that will pose a risk to community health when disturbed.

Concern prevails, that these contaminated dust particles (that carry radioactive molecules), will contribute to an increase, and complicate existing cases, respiratory disease, such as respirable silica.

What is dust containing respirable crystalline silica particles?

Dust containing respirable crystalline silica particles is commonly called silica dust. Activities such as cutting, grinding, sanding, drilling, loading or demolishing products that contain silica can generate respirable particles of crystalline silica dust that are small enough to breathe into your lungs. **This dust may not be visible.**

(Sourced: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/silica)

It is commonly called silica or silica dust. What is the risk to construction workers? Silica is the biggest risk to construction workers after asbestos. Heavy and prolonged exposure to RCS can cause lung cancer and other serious respiratory diseases.

(Sourced: www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/cancer)

- Containment of this radioactive dusk will be dependent on the usage of water from the Mitchell River – a remaining naturally undammed river, that is critical for local farming, fishery, the health of water way arteries that link to the icon known as our ‘Lakes System’. This is in addition to the water piped from the bore field to the mining site storage dam.

This mining project is intending on *a proposal water usage* consumption of up to and inclusive of **3 billion litres per annum over a 15- year period, plus usage of unallocated winter-fill vacancies licenses from the Mitchell River.**

Case Study: The Mountain Pass Mining Project. This was a USA based mining company, established in the 1950's. USA sold this rare-earth mining enterprise (2002), built on meeting the diverse demand for devices aligned to the technology industry. USA sent this business off-shore (China) due to environmental concerns.

I was able to research and find that it was reported that the environmental concerns from this Mining venture resulted in radioactive dust, and material. I quote:

- (a) “ (the) radioactive material (was found to be) clinging to the elements” (University of Waterloo, Canada). (Elements definable as skin, clothing, internal bodily organs, trees).
- (b) “the end impact..could be on the central nervous system, cancers like bone cancer, skin cancer, and cardiovascular”. (Sourced: Yale Environment Report – Yale University. Author: Michael Standerd – July 2, 2019).

The Mountain Pass Mining Project: (Sourced: Internet under the search drive 'rare-earth mining' -dated 9th October 2020) investigation identified that:

- Pipelines used to transport water to control the radioactive dust require interval cleaning. The “pipeline repeatedly ruptured during cleaning operations to remove mineral deposits called scale. **The scale is radioactive** because of the presence of thorium and radium, which occur naturally in the rare-earth ore.”
- “radioactive and other hazardous waste flowed onto the desert floor”.

With, or without the rupturing of pipelines, the cleaning process is a procedure required. The cleaning by-product is radioactive scale.

Where will this be directed to by KOPL?

Containment of this type of mining follows the norm of using tailing dams to hold ‘contaminated material and by-product of mining,’ as was used in the Mountain Pass Project.

KOPL Mining Project proposes the construction of tailing dams, dimensions of 90 Hectares x 1 square kilometre in length. These holding tanks, will be holding tailing waste and flocculants (chemicals to treat the tailings).

Location planning is to be on the high ground above two significant water ways – the Perry River and the Mitchell River.

Will not this aspect of the mining plans, documented by KOPL, present significant risks?

I cannot stress enough the combined risk factors of water & soil contamination, alongside, the air borne radioactive particles to the employees engaged in the project, community members close to and beyond the mining location.

My concerns are amplified and, I believe, confirmed by the EES Report.

Report: Socio-Economic Report – EES Maps confirms **harm towards others**.

- **Figure 9.28** identifies the concentration of the contaminated dust. It identifies concentration of up to PM2.5 during operations to be present over a 5-year period of the mining project. **‘2.5 micrometres is the health indicator for fine particles or respirable dust capable of deep penetration into the lungs and alveoli.**

The Map notates ● **Sensitive Receptives**. These sensitive receptives are **inclusive** of households.

Can this component of ● **Sensitive Receptives dehumanise, dissociate or dismiss** the collateral damage of this proposed mining venture?

- **Figure 9.41** denotes the distribution of *respiratory silica* within a 12- year period.

The health concerns because of radio-active airborne particles is confirmed by evidence in cancer research and cases. The radioactive particles because of mining are inclusive of **radon** – the product of ionizing radiation.

This is what I have learnt.

(Source: Australian Institute for Health & Welfare – Internet sourced: 9th October 2020)

(a) “Ionizing radiation **is not detectable by human senses**...is used in a wide variety of fields such as ...manufacturing, construction and many other areas, but presents health hazard ..exposure to ionizing radiation causes damage to living tissue, can result in radiation burns, cell damage, radiation sickness, cancer and death.”

(b) “cancer is a stochastic effect of radiation..cancer starts with a single cell whose operation is disrupted. Normal cell operation is controlled by the chemical structure of DNA molecules, also called chromosomes.

When radiation deposits enough energy in organic tissue to cause ionization, this tends to break molecular bonds, and thus alter the molecular structure of the irradiated molecules. “

(c) “unlike chemical or physical triggers for cancer, penetrating radiation hits molecules within cells randomly..become highly reactive free radicals that cause further chemical change.”

(d) “major damage normally results in the cell dying or being unable to reproduce. This effect is responsible for Acute Radiation Syndrome”

(e) Acute Radiation Syndrome “heavily damaged cells cannot become cancerous..(but) partially functional cells may be capable of proliferating and eventually developing into cancer, especially if the tumor suppressor genes are damaged.”

Here is the alarming concern:

(f) “Latest research suggest that mutagenic events do not occur immediately..surviving cells appear to have acquired a genomic instability which causes an increased rate of mutations in future generations. The cell will then progress through multiple stages of neoplastic transformation that may culminate into a tumour after years of incubation.”

Do we want to put our present and future generations before this risk?

How can any real compensation be aligned when this (as other) mining project (with a projection life span of 15-20 years) be then made accountable?

With the acknowledged radioactive dust, that is not detectable or visible to humans, is going to be a real by-product of KOPL operations. It is critical to mitigate ALL real, likely and historically evident, risks of such mining for our community.

East Gippsland – Gippsland, like all land masses, experience strong winds and unpredictable weather patterns, patterns that are being forecasted to become more unpredictable climate change events. This, in my view, qualifies both the noun and verb definition of harm.

Can these risks be ignored or buried under ‘mitigated presentations of reducing the impact of mining’? My response is NO. Why?

I invite the honourable members of this Inquiry to support my principles and values, to always operate within the realm of being proactive and preventative, rather than reactive, to foreseeable, and well indicated risks.

This is my social responsibility stance towards humanity and the footprint I wish to be known to leave (and encourage others to leave) in this world and in particular, my community and nation.

What are the radioactive dust particles composition? Is radon present? What other elements and particles are present in this mining’s radioactive particles? How do they align with evidence on the wellbeing of humans?

What would happen to the employee and/or community member, who in a few decades develops cancer, or have current recovery compromised or jeopardized.

Can there be insurance of compensation and financial security for their families?

Who will pay for this health bill? What guarantee is being offered that this Mining Project will repeat the risk to health as asbestos has with our famous James Hardie Enterprise?

KOPL is the product of an entity that has evolved because of corporate registrations under various identities (legally) since their presence in East Gippsland.

(Continued on Page 9)

I am informed that Kalbar is a mining enterprise with limited experience – or no established history in mining. The out-sourcing of the mining project venture has been a progressive expansion of sub-company structures engaged in negotiations where the backbone of this mining venture will be under *the invested interests* of an off-shore/abroad mining company.

The timeline which I have been able to establish is:

- Kalbar Resources Limited were the original 'proponent' of the Fingerboards Project.
- Kalbar Resources Ltd (KRL) 'bought' the 'Glenaladale Mineral Sands' project from Rio Tinto in 2013.
- KRL changed their name to Kalbar Limited (KL) in August 2019.
- Kalbar Resources Pty Ltd (KRPL) was also set up in the month of August 2019 as a \$2.00 Company.
- In September 2019, the name was changed to Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd.
- 19th March 2020, Kalbar Limited notified both the Commonwealth Environment Department and Victoria's Earth Resources of the transfer of the Fingerboards Project to a new 'Proponent' – Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd. This was approved in May 2020.
- As of the 20th July 2020, 94% of shareholdings, under KOPL, was owned by the Dutch Company, AKNR BV. This presented some investigative challenge. This resulted in Kalbar Operations P/L re-assessing its foreign ownership – as a claimant of being an Australian company.
- KOPL in September claimed that they had found a \$147Million dollar error in the number of shares issued in June 2020, stating that they are now were a company with a 74.75% ownership under the company name of Kalbar Limited.
- Kalbar Property Pty Ltd, was originally set up as Robian Resources Pty Ltd. Any properties bought in Kalbar's name have been transferred to Robian Resources Pty Ltd. Its original directors have now been removed and the company is now 'owned' by KOPL.
- All properties bought to date have been funded up front by Inkjar Pty Ltd, a company owned by Brad Farrell, who is a director of all three Kalbar companies.
- This activity of corporate entity movements raises concerns, regarding the potential accountability of the currently identified KOPL, as the 'front office' of this mining project. Whilst companies can 'register' an ABN legally – the concern is the lack of transparency governing this trail of corporate identity changes.
- The upshot is that if Kalbar Limited or Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd declare bankruptcy or cease to exist for 'corporate reasonings' that meet and represent the interest of shareholders, there are no assets to pay out creditors.

What guarantees will be present during the lifetime of this mining venture?

Is this a mining project to be driven by a remote and detached conglomerate of stakeholders driven by profit only, at all costs?

Should not the East Gippsland community be identified as equal stakeholders in this mining venture?

Profit for this KOPL stakeholders' rests in the health and sustainability of this Region.

The Australian Institute for Health & Welfare – Internet sourced: 9th October 2020 continued to state:

- (g) “Radiation can cause cancer in most parts of the human body, in all animals, and at any age, although radiation-induced solid tumours usually take 10-15 years, and can take up to 40 years, to become clinically manifest, and radiation-induced leukaemia’s, typically require 2-9 years to appear.”
- (h) “Children and adolescents are twice as likely to develop radiation-induced leukaemia as adults; radiation exposure before birth has ten times the effect.”

I cannot support a mining project that is so close to an active and thriving community.

I cannot exchange the benefits of manufacturing devices at the cost of the health and wellbeing of other members of our community. I cannot support the exchange of some mining benefits for humans to be bought at the cost for other humans (or animals – part of our natural eco-system).

I cannot place a higher inputted value for one group of people, at the cost of devaluing the inputted value for another group of people not when the real, perceived and foreseeable risks place one group at a disadvantaged status due to living and quality of living versus economic-profit fulfilment.

The cost(or gain, determined by one’s moral compass and value system) of principle driven living versus profit driven living.

I cannot accept the **costs** of a relatively short term venture – a venture that potentially, will lead to further financial costs for our health system (rural communities are already disadvantaged in terms of access to specialised medical services), tax-payers monies spent on further inquiries and investigation to explain an increase in cancer cases in our Region and then the expenditure to respond.

I would rather support a proactive and preventative approach against a reactive and responsive approach in later times to come, where it will be stated and deemed to have been preventable.

Ethical conduct is always housed in the domain of how we treat others – their right to freedom, to enjoy prosperity, secured within the parameters of safety. This must at times override any economic or political gains.

- This mine **will** have impact as it plans to operate amid:
 - (a) fertile and productive agricultural farming and farming communities, that require a healthy river/waterway system supply, for the natural sedimentation that produces fertile soil
 - (b) rural primary schools, households, primary production, farming communities
 - (c) an extensive ‘food bowl’ that serves an extensive and profitable chain of business ventures, alongside employment
 - (d) residential communities – and all that these contain.

All these settings are inclusive of people who are deserving to NOT be at risk of another disaster, alongside the annual risks of natural disasters – floods and fires.

Can we risk ‘industrial accident’ that places at risk our natural water supply and water systems? NO is my response.

Can we risk an entire community’s drinking water with contamination – as dams and acid rain, and residential water tanks, become contaminated from an invisible enemy - radioactive particles, that are not visible or detectable with ease by the community?

Do we want to reverse the promising work done in Regional Victoria’s fight against cancer?

Gippsland Regional Integrated Cancer Services (GRICS) ‘Cancer Profile’ document states:

- (a) “Cancer death rates have declined since 1982 with average falls of 1.5% per year for males and 1.2% for females. This has been attributed to an increase in earlier screening practices, a reduction in tobacco use and improvements in treatment.”
- (b) “Five-year survival rates increased from 49% to 67% for the period of 1989-2013.”
- (c) “Estimations are that by 2025-2029 the annual incidence of cancer will reach over 41,000; this represents an increase of 39% from 2010-2014; Over this period deaths from cancer will increase to over 13,000 per year; new cases and deaths are increasing rapidly; this is largely due to the growth and ageing ..population”;
- (d) “Cancer is the leading cause of death in Gippsland. (Source: Victorian Cancer Registry, 2016)”
- (e) “For the period 2011-2026, Gippsland’s population aged 65+ is projected to increase at a rate well above the state average..” (Sourced: Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development in this report).

The GRICS Cancer profile is inclusive of all the Shires in the Gippsland Region – this report was not privy or inclusive of the risks of the Fingerboards Mining Project. It is particularly aware of the cost of the open cut mining that is an icon in the areas of Morwell and Latrobe.

The ongoing open cut mining in Gippsland and ‘haze’ in Gippsland, for power production, does not require the additional mining by-products that will result from KOPL mining venture.

The Traralgon Cancer Centre (just outside of Traralgon) was built in response to the higher rate per head of population for cancer in Victoria.

The Professional Network – Gippsland ‘Brief Population Profile – Gippsland Snapshot – May 2016 publication identifies that: (2001 Database)

- (a) The Top five (5) cause of death in the East Gippsland Region in order of death are: (1st) Malignant Cancers; (2nd) Cardiovascular Diseases; (3rd) Chronic Respiratory Diseases; (4th) Unintentional Injuries; (5th) Neurological and Sense Disorders.
- (b) The Top five (5) causes of disability adjusted in life years: (1st) Neurological and sense disorders; (2nd) Mental Disorders; (3rd) Malignant cancers (4th) Chronic respiratory diseases; (5th) Cardiovascular Diseases.
- (c) East Gippsland had the highest reading of ARIA+ (Remoteness index of Australia - sourced www.health.vic.gov.au) sitting at 8.33 – the highest in Gippsland Victoria
- (d) Premature deaths (0-74) per age standardised rate per 100,000 (2008-2012), which is at a significantly higher rate when compared to Australia were (1) males – 351; Lung cancer – 27; Chronic Obstructive pulmonary disease – 12.”
- (e) Premature deaths due to Cancer sat at 113 – age standardised rate per 100,000 in age group 0-74 for East Gippsland – with Latrobe (120); Wellington (124) and Gippsland Overall (110).

Acceptance of the term risk, would lead to a logical resolution that if mining:

- (a) creates radio- active dust – that cannot be guaranteed to be contained at all times;
- (b) will not experience or operate without an industrial accident/s;
- (c) that radon (or such radioactive/chemical elements) may be present (as is present in similar mining ventures);
- (d) Results in radioactive particles that are known to cause cancer within a lifetime cycle – then we must NOT allow it to proceed and contribute to a building of statistics. Statistics that align to health – physical, psychological, emotional, financial, social plus more. Mental disorders are aligned to trauma, change beyond one’s capacity to control or influence, resulting in loss of capacity to be resilient. This is equally not been fully explored as a real outcome for this community, due to ‘loss of loved ones’

These results raise concern that if the risks to health – physical and mental – East Gippsland community members will potentially experience the over-laying risk of medical care isolation.

Let us not add to infrastructures demands and statistics. Currently, there are some indicators of reducing cancers – alongside predictions of increased others. Premature deaths can be proactively reduced, as a risk factor, by not introducing radioactive mining by-products, which are currently not a risk to our community because they remain encased in the safety of being underground – untampered and undisturbed.

The prize in medical care for a nation, must align with the ability to be preventative and proactive.

The Health care sector in rural Victoria – Gippsland is in need of expansion – but the type of expansion that KOPL will bring, is only a probable expansion on ‘demand on limited resources.’

We do not need new and emerging cases to further strain our health system.

I would rather see our decision makers prioritize a reducing, disease eradication objectives as a sign of progress that is embedded in wisdom.

This mining project, I believe, will in fact jeopardize this objective as social responsibility. Improving health outcomes allows for relocation of financial resources to other communal pursuits and embellishments in enterprise. This is responsible governorship when one is in the position of Government. This is certainly my invitation to the role of the State Planning Ministry.

In summary to Objection 1, I offer the well-known fact, supported by an ABC HEALTH REPORT which again reported the reality that: (<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/healthreport>)

“The health of Victorians is significantly worse in rural areas. Overall, people living in rural Victoria have a life expectancy of 1.5 years less than those living in the metropolitan areas. Rural areas tend to be poorer than city areas.. access to medical services, and a less healthy physical and social environment.. greater evidence of suicide, road traffic accidents..heart disease and airways diseases, such as asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis than in metropolitan areas.

Life expectancy is dramatically worse for Aboriginal people..eight to 18 years less..”

I do not want to add to these already challenging health statistics for East Gippsland and Gippsland – a significant land proportion of the State of Victoria. I ask that our Planning Ministry will favour and agree to this stance.

(Continued on Page 14)

Objection 2: Proposed location for the mining project for the community of East Gippsland Victorian – Australian citizens. **Environmental impact – particularly the Mitchell River.** Historical data affirms and supports that rehabilitation – as an inference of returning to a status of origin before disturbance – has historically, not been attained globally.

I begin this objection with an advanced invitation that part of this Inquiry process includes a tour and visit of the proposed mining site and surrounding communities. A visitation that is accompanied by a representative of key stakeholders, including those in opposition to the venture.

If this is in fact part of the process, I apologise for any implication that a decision and/or recommendations could occur without such a process.

It was not until I personally went to the 'site' that the full environmental and community impact was realised. I trust that the honourable members of this Inquiry, as part of the Inquiry process, will visit the full extent of the proposed mining. The 'full extent' I invite is to be inclusive of:

- The mining site – waste area, proximity to water/Mitchell river system
- The route on travel that will be undertaken by trucks and other industrial/commercial vehicles; rural road services that will be impacted
- The proximity to farming and residential living, schools and community hubs.

The legal definition of 'environmental rehabilitation' is:

Environmental Rehabilitation means restoration and reversal of annihilable or degradable environment back to better states and to ample ecosystem.

The business definition of 'environmental rehabilitation' is

(Sourced: www.businessdictionary.com/definition/land-rehabilitation.html)

The process of restoring an area of land back to its original state following a disruption or damage to it. This process entails the removal of toxins and other dangerous substances, the removal of other structures, and improvement of the soil. This process is typically used for rectifying issues that have been caused by processes such as drilling for oil, coal mining, and other activities, as well as for improving land following a natural disaster.

(Source: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/land-rehabilitation.html>)

The definition assigned to mining environmental rehabilitation is:

Modern mine rehabilitation aims to minimize and mitigate the environmental effects of modern mining, which may in the case of open pit mining involve movement of significant volumes of rock. Rehabilitation management is an ongoing process, often resulting in open pit mines being backfilled.

(Sourced: Land rehabilitation - Wikipedia wikipedia.org/wiki/Land rehabilitation)

A general understanding of environmental rehabilitation is:

Environmental Rehabilitation Project Plans outline the requirements to return an area that has been disturbed due to an activity or development to a state which approximates the state prior to the aforementioned activity/development. It is a vital process of any construction.

(Sourced: Environmental rehabilitation « Ksems www.ksems.co.za/environmental-rehabilitation)

What are rehabilitation practices?

(Sourced: Land Rehabilitation Definition | Investopedia, Rehabilitation practices include removing man-made structures, toxins, and other dangerous substances, improving soil conditions, and adding new flora.

(sourced: www.investopedia.com/terms/l/landrehabilitation.asp)

These definitions endorse my significant concern. It appears that the standards applied to the expectations and reality of 'environmental rehabilitation' tabulated as part of the licencing processes, in mining, are outside the scope of other 'bodies'. Bodies, being legal institutions, environmental bodies and I strengthen to add, communities – East Gippsland in this instance.

There is no profitable basis for a mining venture to rehabilitate in accordance with other standards of operation. The natural eco-system in the proposed area – in magnitude alone – I do not believe, can (and would) be restored in accordance with legal and business standards of operation.

Whilst trees could be planted – can the soil be 'returned let alone improved' for the sustainability of any projected plantations? **I venture to express deep concern, that the reality of this question is NO.** Words to the effect offered, along the lines 'of a commitment to restore the environment' can be mitigated in the future – who would have the financial resources or willingness to take any mining interest through the legal processes? If in fact, this mining entity can be traced at such a time.

In fact, with corporate law allowing a change of entity as evident as Kalbar has engaged in, I believe a reality and/or risk, that any objections as to 'environmental rehabilitation' will serve as a source of significant differences as to what this means. Global evidence supports that rehabilitation after mining often results in 'abandonment of site.'

Making any real or desired pursuit for true environmental rehabilitation is difficult. It could and may be deemed as poor usage of government resources, hence, forgotten. At best, if a challenge were to be mounted, the 'waiting time' would only compound recovery and the projected risks to this natural landscape and all that it offers and sustains.

East Gippsland Catchment and Management Authority identified in their report (Improving East Gippsland Rivers – Priorities for River Health Report: 2007-2012 – Author: John Pearson) that our “rivers need continual actions of protection.”



Source: <https://www.egwater.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/1EGWmap2013.jpg>

The map above shows that East Gippsland Water Services are located close to the proposed mining site (Walpa & Lindenow). It clearly shows that the townships of Lindenow, Bairnsdale, Eagle Point, Paynesville and Newlands Arm water and sewerage services are drawn from the Mitchell River).



East Gippsland Water states that the “Mitchell Water Supply System is East Gippsland Waters’ largest supply system and serves the communities of Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Lindenow, Lindenow South, Eagle Point, Newlands Arm, Raymond Island, Banksia Peninsula, Granite Rock WyYung, Bruthen, Sarsfield, Nicholson, Johnsonville, Swan Reach, Metung, Lakes Entrance, Lake Bunga, Lake Tyers, Lake Tyres Beach and Nowa Nowa.”

“The drinking water for these communities is drawn from the Mitchell River at Glenaladale, northwest of Bairnsdale, at a rate of up to 350 litres per second (35 megalitres a day) and pumped into storage at Woodlen, 2.5 km away. This is the initial storage point for all water supplied to the Mitchell system customers. “

“In drawing water from the Mitchell River, **the priority is to ensure minimal impact on the environment**. This means that East Gippsland Water concentrates on drawing water during peak stream flows and adjusts the draw rate depending on flow conditions.”

(Source; www.egwater.vic.gov.au. Internet sourced: 9th October 2020)

This mining project by-products, places KOPL, contrary to the position of East Gippsland Water terms of operation and possible capacity to meet its obligations.

This mining project, to my understanding, will be dependent on over 3 billion litres of water annually – plus accessing unallocated winter-fill licences.



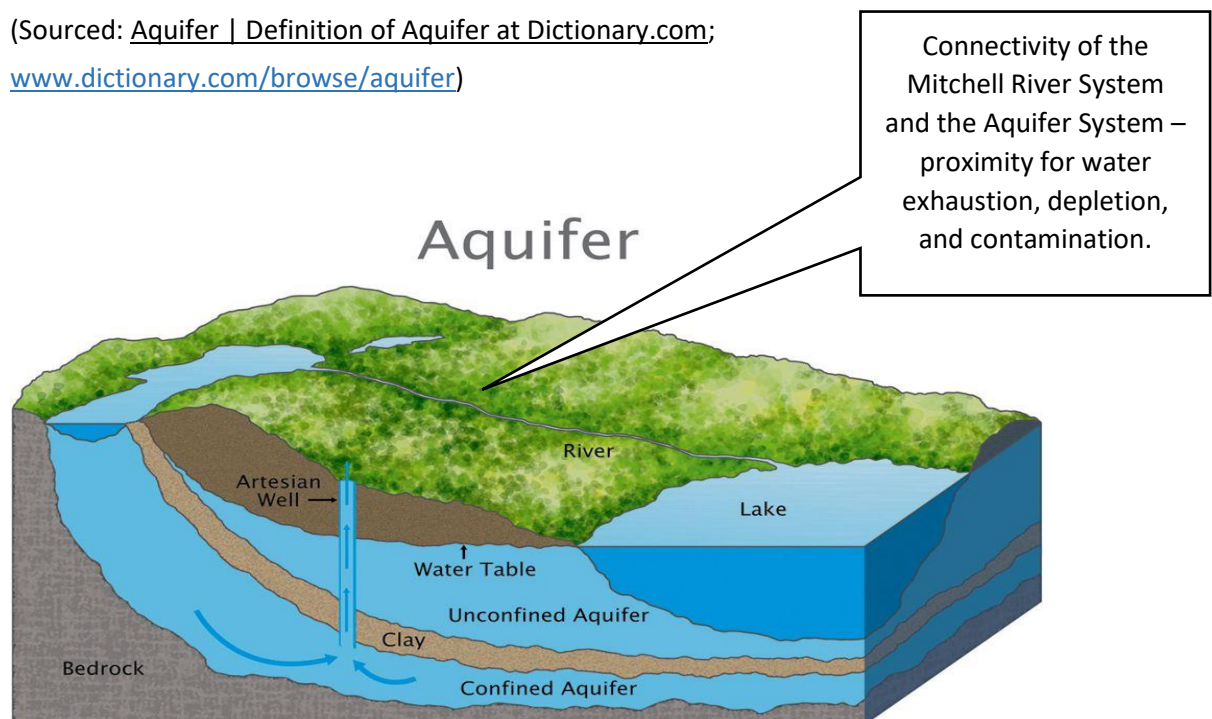
KOPL already have an established water bore field of significant dimensions located on the private properties south of the mine site. This water bore is accessing the Latrobe Aquifer.

I was able to understand that:

1. The meaning of an aquifer is:

An underground layer of permeable rock, sediment (usually sand or gravel), or soil that yields water. The pore spaces in aquifers are filled with water and are interconnected, so that water flows through them.

(Sourced: [Aquifer | Definition of Aquifer at Dictionary.com; www.dictionary.com/browse/aquifer](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/aquifer))



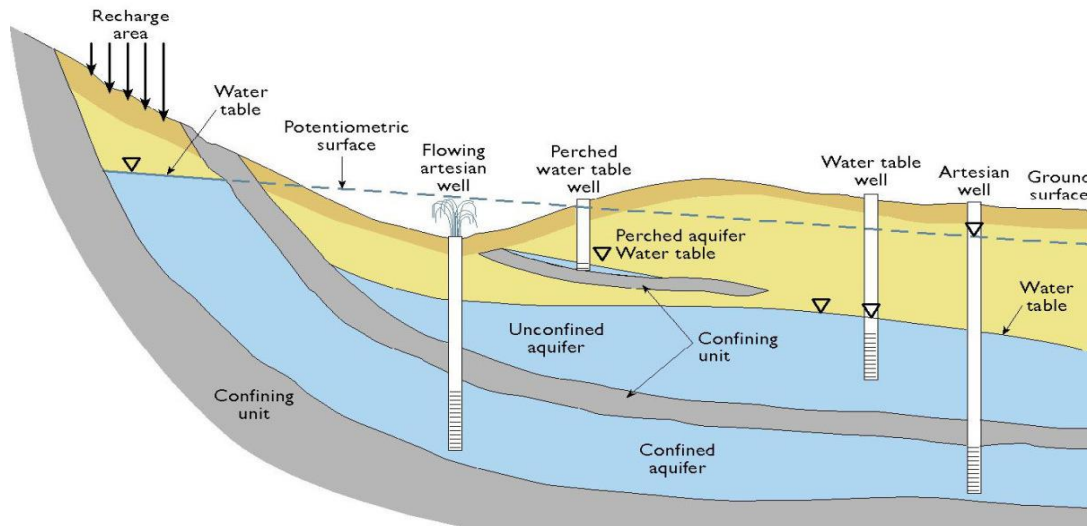
2. That the characteristics of an aquifer are:

The water table and unsaturated zone are also illustrated. An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock, rock fractures or unconsolidated materials (gravel, sand, or silt). Groundwater can be extracted using a water well. The study of water flow in aquifers and the characterization of aquifers is called hydrogeology.

(Sourced: [Aquifer - Wikipedia www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquifer](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquifer))

The KOPL Latrobe Aquifer, is intended to pump the water from the aquifer through above ground pipes, to service KOPL's water storage dam (Large 2gl. dimension/holding capacity). This Aquifer is a delicate system of an underwater system. Industrial accident, poor or at best, **undetected abuse, infra-structure violations, can permanently impact this under-ground water table.**

Does Gippsland-East Gippsland need a similar natural disaster, as event, in the Darling Basin? A situation when *interests* have resulted in a significant change in a once experienced sound water flow that served agriculture and the Australian market?



The Latrobe Aquifer is part of an intensive network. It is unacceptable that a singular business venture has such entitlements to both under-ground and above ground access to our sophisticated and natural correlations of water systems. Natural water systems offer the environment's natural sustainability needs, alongside agriculture productions. The agricultural sectors of farming do not cut off, tamper, or impede this source of 'life'. Agriculture, alongside other industries in contrast, this project by KOPL, are invested parties in preserving this natural resource for the longevity of their industries and region.

The Victorian Government supported the preservation of East Gippsland, by not allowing Coal Seam Gas into East Gippsland. A significant concern for Coal Seam Gas mining was the access to our underground water system. The impact of KOPL mining project – with reference to accessing the Latrobe Aquifer – represents the same or similar risk. The risk aligned to the science of hydrology.

Hydrology involves changes in dynamics and aquifer interconnectivity.

Coal seam gas extraction can reduce groundwater pressure and, subject to aquifer connectivity, has potential consequences for freshwater aquifers both in terms of quantity and quality. Connectivity and leakage between aquifers can also have implications for surface water resources

(Sourced: Australian Government: Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment.)

I implore consistent decision making by our Victorian Government Planning Ministry. Consistency based on similar concerns lobbied to the Victorian Government regarding Coal Seam Mining. KOPL will be using the science of hydrology, in accessing its projected water needs for this project.

I am trusting continuity and consistency in the partnership between the Victorian Government and its constituents of Gippsland-East Gippsland in this matter.

What guarantee (other than KOPL's written contractual wording) is there that this is all that will be drawn from East Gippsland water supply and drinking water supply?

In fact, should such quantities of water be drawn from the Mitchell River and Latrobe Aquifer systems, to mitigate radioactive materials, dust control on the haul roads? Is not preservation of our complex and inter-locked water *systems* be the great imputed value in planning?

KOPL mining in East Gippsland, is a process of drilling and mining, needing the usage of water – **more continual dependency on a supply of water**, to separate the extracted minerals and targeted mining product/s.

Should a **singular business venture hold such entitlements above an expansive community and geographical landscape? Can such sought after entitlements**, be weighted higher than the wellbeing, health and prosperity of Gippsland – East Gippsland, beyond a business venture?

The Mitchell River needs protection.

It is the life of this part of Victoria and Region. We have an obligation to protect all water sources – rivers, streams, underground water ways and estuaries. The richness of any advancing community has to be a secured supply of clean water in the present and well into a future which we will not be participants of. Generations to come have the right to expect good guardianship in the present.

This mining project's proximity to our drinking water supply and inter linked water systems, is one of significant concern.

This concern multiples in urgency, if not a potential natural disaster, in the making.

KOPL *stated* dependency is an estimated calculation – what if they need more, rather than less?

KOPL should not have such an entitlement, as a business entity that is a transient occupant in East Gippsland.

This is in an area that consistently faces drought and farming demands on this water system. A water system that is also important in its 'system of water ways' to 'flush' itself, during floods.

The risks to this water system are and could be profound. It would be **too late** for the consequences endured when a river system is damaged or compromised. Toxin dust and impact on the current natural flow of the Mitchell will implode this community.

This is not emotive language – this is a statement of Real Risk. **Disturbing the Mitchell River as a paramount need, as identified by East Gippsland Water, and should not be ignored.**

The case of monitoring the contractual depletion of our water from the Mitchell, by KOPL is NOT an insurance against the risks.

This report from East Gippsland Water confirms the importance of not disturbing the flow on the Mitchell River.

Why is it important to not disturb the Mitchell River System?

(Rehabilitation of a River System and its' water ways and estuaries IS AT RISK)

- the RISK of contamination of the Mitchell River, streams and estuaries by toxins and change of water flow will impact the sensitive bio-aquatic climate of a healthy river system
- depletion of essential water services to the extended community and businesses of East Gippsland – a region already plagued with drought/water restrictions – **will contribute** to seasonal natural disasters (droughts, fires) reliance on water flow and supply
- impact on the **quality of drinking water** in East Gippsland. No more to be said or debated on this point
- quality of water is part of life – all life, inclusive of plant and wildlife – must be protected
- clean water is part of health – our hospital and other services are dependent on clean water
- our fire fighters are dependent on reliable water supplies
- water, as an essential commodity, with combined risks of contamination and restrictions, will place the health and wellbeing of the community at considerable risk (e.g. Cancer); will contribute to premature deaths
- the additional expenditure of monitoring the 'health of the Mitchell and River Systems' by East Gippsland Water would be a financial 'pass on' to our community, if this project proceeds; additional financial burden that is based on conflict of interest platform is not acceptable.
- drought and fire are known risks to our communities – some of these serviced areas already have experienced enough 'natural disasters' and trauma
- the risk to the Mitchell – risk as defined by me in this document – would be a PROFOUND ADDITIONAL NATURAL DISASTER for East Gippsland
- if the flow is changed – what will be additional and compounding cost of green algae outbreaks for our Lakes System?

The Gippsland Lakes contain many different types of algae at varying levels as part of the natural environment and balance of the Lakes system. Weather conditions, nutrient levels, salinity, **and water flows all affect the levels of algae and can contribute to the formation of algal blooms on the Lake**

(Sourced: www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/rivers)

The undammed and free flowing water of the Mitchell, as one of the remaining undammed natural rivers, plays an important role, particularly in ‘flushing’ when the ‘Lake System’ has green algae outbreaks. This has regularly been a problem when the summer season approaches.

How important the Mitchell River system is?

(Sourced: East Gippsland Catchment and Management Authority Report – Priorities for River Health Report: 2007 – 2012). Author John Pearson)

“The Mitchell begins at the confluence of the Wonnangatta and Dargo Rivers below the Dargo townships. The Dargo River rises on the southern slopes of Mount Hotham. The main tributary is the Little Dargo River. The Wonnangatta River begins on the northern slopes of Mount Howitt. The main tributaries are the Crooked, Dry, Humffray, Moroka and Wongungarra Rivers.

The Mitchell is joined by the Wentworth River at Tabberabbera. Below this point, the river enters the Mitchell River National Park, where it flows through spectacular gorges. A tributary Woolshed Creek also has an impressive gorge mentioned in the Aboriginal legends and known as Den of Nargun.

Below the national park, the river joins Iguana Creek and enters the floodplains. Stony and Skull Creeks also join the river. (The) sediment deposits here have made this a fertile area for intensive agriculture.

Below Bairnsdale, the river flows through the coastal plain before entering Lake King, through the silt jetties (Eagle Point/Paynesville) also known as the digitate or finger jetties...The Cut now allows the river to pass directly into Jones Bay.

In the *Victorian River Health Strategy (Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 2002)* it stated that “the Mitchell River is recognised as one of only two large rivers in Victoria that stand out because of their high conservation value, high level of naturalness of flows, relative intactness of the entire river system, and significance for larger systems – the Gippsland Lakes.” (Page 52).”

The ‘Lakes System’ (including a range of estuaries) is an icon of East Gippsland Region.

It attributes to the financial prosperity of its community – by our primary/farming industries, fisheries (professional and recreational) and our organisms and aquatic life – inclusive of dolphins, swans, and other bird life.

The financial dependency of our hospitality industry is profoundly dependent on maintaining the pristine status of 'The Lakes System' – of which the Mitchell is substantial. This industry has already endured sufficient financial cost (alongside mental health challenges) due to the Coronavirus 19 pandemic.

East Gippsland Catchment and Management Authority report identified that it holds the responsibilities of *River Health Strategy*, inclusive of:

- “carrying out strategic planning for the “environmental values of rivers, streams and estuaries. (for) bank erosion..pest plants and animals; with priorities including water quality monitoring, restoration of fish habitat, ..and native vegetarian restoration.”
- “Alongside specific strategic planning for all of the East Gippsland Rivers – in specific reference to the Mitchell River, it set the objective of “removal of Willows.. 50 kilometres above Glenaladale off-take will be fenced from grazing stock and revegetation.”
- “Ensure that the river navigation is not threatening “the deterioration of the habitat of native plants and animals that is essential for a **healthy river system**.”

Let us not undo the work undertaken, and continues to be undertaken in accordance with the duty of care and mandated regulation that govern East Gippsland Water and East Gippsland Catchment and Management Authority.

Why present this information?

1. If the removal of Willows is a threat to the Mitchell because it is classified as a *weed of national significance* – then are not the risks of mining greater to this natural eco-system?

Why is there a Willow Tree eradication program taking place in East Gippsland?

“Willows also inhibit growth of understory species and biodiversity along colonized river reaches which reduces biodiversity of wildlife that a river or stream can support. The thick willow roots also colonise in-stream habitat which would otherwise be used for frogs, macro invertebrates and fish spawning.

Wide Canopies create significant shading when located within water bodies, reducing the amount of sunlight reaching the stream, potentially altering stream temperature and primary production

Research by Doody and Benyon (2010) has shown through water balance calculations over a three-year period, an average potential net water saving of 5.5 ML/year/ha of crown projected area is achievable by removal of in-stream willows with permanent access to water.

Willows reduce water quality, reducing flow and inputting large amounts of organic matter... Leaching of chemicals, such as *cyanidins* and *delphinidins*, into aquatic systems from decomposing willow detritus has also been shown to deter the herbivores that rely on leaves for their food (Rowell-Rahier, 1984 cited by Doody et.al. 2011). Conversely, the native riparian evergreen River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and River Ribbon Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) lose hard, slowly decomposing sclerophyll leaves year-round, as an adaptation to regulate evaporative losses. A diverse range of native macroinvertebrates are adapted to breaking down native vegetation in different ways, providing important inputs into the food chain.”

(Sourced: www.riversofcarbon.org.au)

“A Mature willow tree may consume 100 gallons of water per day during summer months”
(Sourced: [https://homeguides.sfgate.com/weeping-willow-trees-need-lot-](https://homeguides.sfgate.com/weeping-willow-trees-need-lot-water)

[water](#))

- Preservation of water quality, water flow and water usage is a paramount need for a healthy river system eco-biodiversity of aquatic life and complementary flora/vegetation.
- Preservation of the Mitchell River system is also our drinking water – we need to ‘save our water supply’ due to seasonal droughts and to service the existing and projected growth in East Gippsland.
- The risks pertaining to the location of a mining venture, with all its known and acknowledged risks, is contrary to the work of EG Catchment & Management Authority.
- The risks pertaining to the location of this mining venture, aligned with water reduction and contamination, will challenge the operations of East Gippsland Water to secure ‘safe drinking water’ and quantity of usage.

It cannot be expressed strongly enough, the importance of not underestimating the continual impact of drought and water restrictions within this context.

The Coronavirus 19 has impacted on the mental health of many Australians. The Coronavirus 19, plus our drought and fires, has a layered traumatic impact on mental health of Gippslanders. I believe that this mining venture, **in this location** can contribute to the continual trends in poor mental health. Specifically, the increase of risks of mental health and illness, to families, loss of employment due to illness, impact on tourism that flows onto loss of income. Importantly, the real cost to recreational activities due to poor air quality, ALL concerns that heighten anxiety and depression.

Government funding during the pandemic attests to risks to mental health when people’s lives are changed or risk of permanent change. KOPL mining project, with the stated inherit risks, will bring permanent changes which our community will have lost influence and control over.

Have the psychological/mental health costs been inputted into this mining venture for East Gippsland and other Victorians who holiday in this Region?

2. The removal of Gum Trees and neighbouring habitats is a threat to the Ecological Community of Gippsland.

This is what I found – I was unaware of the prevailing risks that already exist to our gum trees in Gippsland due to agriculture:

“What is the ecological community of Gippsland?”

The ecological community was formerly widespread across the central Gippsland plain, but now less than five per cent of its original extent remains. Most known remnants are small—under 10 hectares— and comprise isolated fragments surrounded by a mostly cleared, agricultural landscape.” (Sourced: www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources)

“Is Gippsland red gum endangered?”

The Gippsland Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis* subsp. *mediana*) Grassy Woodland and Associated Native Grassland is a critically endangered ecological community listed under the national environment law.”

(Source: [Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Associated Native ...
www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/1251b4...](http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/1251b4...))

What is a forest red gum tree?

Forest Red Gum *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, is also known by the other names: Blue Gum (Qld). This tall *Eucalyptus* tree has a wide distribution range along Australia's east coast. It occurs from coastal to mountainous locations and can reach a height of up to 50m under ideal conditions.”

(Sourced: [www.identification of Eucalyptus Species on Australia's East-Coast](http://www.identificationofEucalyptusSpeciesonAustralia'sEast-Coast))

The presence of gum trees, in this region, are not accidental plantations.

Gum trees “support diverse understory terrestrial plants and macrophytes... Ideally though, if we want healthy biodiverse rivers and streams, we need healthy, functioning native vegetation along our waterways as that is what our ecosystems are designed to thrive within.”

(Sourced: www.riversofcarbon.org.au)

There is a correlation and dynamic relationship in the presence of gum trees with our water systems.

KOPL Mining **will** impact the environment’s land, vegetation, water ways systems that serve the community – people, animals and the micro-organisms that are the invisible elements that sustain a healthy environment.

This mining site will be responsible for the removal, over 13 square kilometres of natural landscape, up to 700 mature gum trees.

Investigation of the by-products of mining in general, affirms that **Kalbar or no other mining venture**, can (or has) restored the environment in accordance to 'it's original state, following a disruption or damage, to a level that the rehabilitation, where the restoration is a return to the same or better state'.

Mining companies are not experts in environmental eco-systems – land, water and the complexities of the 'systems' of habitat that prevail and how they all contribute to a healthy and sustainable natural system. This is a dedicated science. If the EES is the science being depended upon – and is contrary to global evidence – the conflict of interest concerns can only be strengthened.

Mining is a dedicated financial venture that meets the profitable outcomes for stakeholders and shareholders.

Mining impacts the land and water systems. "The acidic water released from metal mines or coal mines also drains into surface water or seeps below ground to acidify groundwater. The loss of normal pH of water can have disastrous effects on life sustained by such water."

(Sourced:www.worldatlas.com – Joyce Chepkemoi on April 25 2017)

East Gippsland water systems, the 'Lakes System' and Landcare already have challenges. The reports (EG Catchment & Management Authority, EG Water) I have sourced were not inclusive of the risks and danger due to mining.

The Reports (East Gippsland Water, East Gippsland Catchment and Management Authority) were researched, compiled and written **without a mining concern factorised into the equation**. These Reports both confirm and identify how sensitive our rivers and water systems are and what is paramount for their sustainable health- as a matter for community wellbeing.

The key message of these Reports, in context of this submission, is that the eradication and management of environmental 'foreign intruders' that pollute and shift the natural aquatic/natural environment, must be dealt with.

This Mining project is a significant environmental foreign intruder.

I plea for a visionary and generationally futuristic perspective when considering if KOPL will be allowed to proceed. KOPL is in real terms, a natural disaster for East Gippsland in the making.

I believe mine, and other submissions evidence, supporting the risks to our environment, community, and business sector, due to this mining project, by Kalbar Operational Pty Ltd – is preventable and secured by not allowing it to proceed.

This is the only insurance for East Gippsland.

Objection 3: Risk to the financial wellbeing of East Gippsland Community and beyond as a derivative of the mining project. Risks to existing primary industries and the tourist industry – employment, production, and market share.

A strong advocacy for mining is the mantra of ‘the benefits to the community’ employment. A mantra that is representative of the mining interest. I apologise for my scepticism in this instance for East Gippsland.

“Mining activities are a good source of jobs for local workers, albeit possibly short-term ones.

One of the most obvious ways in which a mining company benefits local communities is through the creation of local jobs. It's also been found that even as jobs in mines are automated or increasingly require technological expertise that may be beyond the scope of local communities to provide, the number of local people employed either directly or indirectly by mining companies remains significant.”

(Sourced: www.mining-international.org)

This project is marketed as a benefit for East Gippsland.

I believe that a selected group of East Gippsland community members *may* benefit e.g. commercial trucking/earth moving. It is implied that hospitality may benefit (e.g. motel bookings/restaurants patronage).

Businesses in the industry of ‘earth moving’ are a minority group. If Motels/restaurants hospitality industries do benefit from housing and feeding transit workers – the cost benefit may be loss of the prosperity of businesses’ once the mining stops (or during the mining period). Alongside the expressed environmental costs and the daily ‘dust’ and unpleasant atmosphere and concerns of pollutants – are all deterrents for sustainable growth in East Gippsland.

Tourism may (or will) be ‘squeezed out’. East Gippsland accommodation and associated hospitality benefits from this mining venture would be very localized.

What about the rest of East Gippsland beyond Lindenow and Bairnsdale – connected by the by-product of Mining? Remember the towns that the Mitchell serves – they all need tourist support **for local employment** and growth.

I am advocating that a relatively short-term immediate profit-making returns to some East Gippsland community members, in a restrictive industry and geographical proximity, is not equitable and sufficiently fair. The specialised and technical workforce needed to run this mining project will be in essence outsourced. The re-employment of workers from the Hazelwood closure (Latrobe Power Station) is not secured. This, I believe was a marketing speculation, by KOPL (or it’s supporters) to promote this mining venture

Are the Hazelwood dis-placed specialised workers still waiting for this mining project?

I am concerned that this mining project's employment contribution, to East Gippsland, stated by KOPL, will not be representative of all or a sufficient diversity representation of businesses in East Gippsland.

The proposed area for the mine will impact established organic certified farmers in the region – a commitment to sustainable agricultural farming that has seen the investment of funds and establishment of family homes, and contribution to the bio-diversity of primary industry production in the Region. The emission of the dust will eliminate and disqualify the Organic Certification gained by these entrepreneurs and residents of East Gippsland.

Existing businesses, such as Bonaccord, may have a *secured water supply* for production,, However, this market for fresh vegetables is at risk of 'pollutants' (outside pesticide control that is currently occurring), held in the 'contaminated dust' that, with consumer awareness, ultimately results in loss of the existing market share.

A limited and singular position of water is not enough for our own large agricultural community to remain distant from this debate. Is there intention to not inform markets? Has this been considered even by our major producers? I am concerned they have not.

What happens to our agricultural, and primary production processing employment then?

One of our main employers, Vegco supplies an extensive market, inclusive of McDonald's. I am confident that McDonald's and alike businesses, would hold NO loyalty to the East Gippsland product if it identified as being at risk of contamination, if not contaminated. McDonald's profit and brand name would not allow it.

The market will come to learn of these concerns. The market responds certainly to real threats, as equally strong as to perceived threats. Marketing is about 'going green' – Hungry Jack's has a burger, with no meat in response to this *environmental health movement*. I am sure that other fast-food chains are not responding to this changing market demand.

East Gippsland food growers and producers needs to be in line with their key stakeholders and client base if they wish to survive in the emerging future.

Any loss of 'business' is a loss of sustainable employment. I believe the risk factor for this outcome can and will occur supported by the content of Objection 1.

I am concerned about the food that I will be consuming alongside many other people who are dependent on our 'food bowl' of production. I certainly do not want to place myself at risk of a serious health issue, alongside other innocent consumers. Invisibility of names and faces of the market is not to be a rest from our duty of care but heighten our responsibilities to avoid acts of negligence – implied or implicit.

Tourism is at the heart of East Gippsland.

This project places this in jeopardy. It is contrary to the vision and planning of *Destination Gippsland – Towards 2030. Gippsland Destination Management Plan* document.

I offer some critical points from this document, particularly in view of what will constitute 'income and employment' in this Region. I have also included some extracts from this document (Pages 2, 19, 28, 32, 34-35, 42 & 46) that are specifically in reference to the East Gippsland Region.

(Sourced: www.committeeforgippsland.com.au)

- "Tourism is an important industry for Gippsland. It generates an estimated \$1 billion for our local economy. The region attracted a record seven million visitors in the year ending March 2019.
- In the year ending March 2019 we welcomed a record 7.06 million visitors to Gippsland, supporting more than ten-thousand local jobs and delivering an economic contribution of \$1 billion to the region. This is an outstanding figure and yet we know Gippsland can achieve more. At a time when the traditional industries that have supported Gippsland are in decline, the visitor economy offers an exciting new chapter in Gippsland's story with the potential for significant job growth, prosperity, and pride for every local community.
- 'Towards 2030' - the Gippsland Destination Management Plan has been developed to provide a clear vision for achieving long-term, sustainable growth of Gippsland's visitor economy.
- Visitors do not see local, state, or federal government boundaries, they see and experience stunning beaches and waterways, pristine parks and wilderness, boutique villages, abundant cycling trails and the very best of food and wine.
- In the year ending March 2019, the Greater Gippsland region (mainland Gippsland) received approximately 7.06 million visitors who spent an estimated \$1 billion. This level of expenditure supports 13,271 direct and indirect jobs, which represents 11.6% of the regional economy.
- Gippsland's destination appeal is underpinned by its outstanding natural attractions, engaging towns and villages scattered throughout the region, Aboriginal and colonial heritage, and its emerging creative industries.
- Visitor projections indicate that Gippsland could receive 8.5 million visitors by 2030 from the current base of 7.06 million visitors. This equates to an additional 150,000 visitors each year until 2030. Visitor nights are projected to grow to 10.5 million by 2030 from the current base of 7.8 million. This means that Gippsland will need to attract an additional 270,000 visitor nights each year to achieve its growth potential by 2030.

If this growth potential is realised, total visitor spending will increase from \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion. For a \$1.5 billion in visitor spending target, the total number of tourism related jobs could increase from the current estimated base of 13,271 jobs to 16,257 (13,007 direct jobs and 3,250 indirect/induced jobs) in Greater Gippsland. This would represent over 12% of jobs in the region. In addition, every direct job from visitor spending generates a further 0.26 jobs in other industries in the region.

- Vision

Gippsland's natural beauty, outstanding experiences and life changing moments inspire the world to visit. To achieve this vision Gippsland needs to be focused and coordinated in its implementation of the *new brand and experience themes* for Gippsland is essential to build awareness and preference for Gippsland, that lead to bookings, more visitors and increased spending in the region.

The *Destination Gippsland – Towards 2030. Gippsland Destination Management Plan* document describes the brand and experience themes to be (a) Exceptional and (b) Hero Experiences.

Without exceptional or hero experiences, Gippsland as a destination will struggle to attract new visitors and will experience low growth. The hero experiences outlined in the DMP are quintessentially Gippsland, they provide a strong competitive advantage over other destinations. The economic benefit of creating these hero experiences is significant with the potential to generate an estimated 235,500 additional visitor nights and increase visitor expenditure by \$49.2 million each year. Together, these hero experiences will facilitate increased visitation to the region and help achieve the accelerated tourism growth target of 10.5 million visitor nights by 2030.

TRC Tourism Pty Ltd (Strategy). The development of a regional events strategy with a focus on attracting and investing in events that develop, promote, and encourage visitation that will generate financial and social benefits to the Gippsland region.

Work together as a region across jurisdictions to grow tourism. Ensure long term sustainable management of natural and cultural assets - World Class Natural Sanctuary Rivers and Coastal Paradise Paddock and Ocean.

- Regional strengths

It boasts one of Australia's biggest and most beautiful inland waterways, pristine stretches of coastline and some of Victoria's most spectacular national parks showcasing alpine peaks and old growth rainforests. The towns, cities, villages, and hamlets of the region celebrate their history and heritage and provide experiences of local life. Artists and artisans are inspired by the people, places, and stories of the region, and through their creative endeavours, offer visitors an insight into the region.

The rolling green pastures of rich agricultural lands boast fresh produce, wineries and hot springs. Gippsland inspires adventure with swimming, fishing, camping, boating, cycling and hiking and a range of other activities for visitors.

- Nature tourism: Gippsland contains the largest area of public land in Victoria, with 1.6 million hectares encompassing forest, state and national parks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, Marine Coastal Parks and Reserves and Ramsar Wetlands. It contains some of Victoria's most striking landscapes and significant national parks and reserves including Wilsons Promontory National Park, the Gippsland Lakes fed by the Avon, Thomson, Latrobe, Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo rivers, Croajingolong National Park, Strzelecki Ranges, and Buchan Caves Reserve. The region also contains outstanding alpine areas such as Mt Baw Baw and parts of the Australian Alps national parks.

These natural assets support a diversity of activities including walking, hiking, cycling, kayaking, boating, fishing and other aquatic activities and alpine sports. Infrastructure such as walking tracks, cycling trails, camping areas, boat launching areas, and lookouts support the visitor experience across the region. Several tourism operators also provide guided opportunities in these areas.

- Regional produce: Gippsland is one of Australia's longest established food tourism destinations that offers a highly diverse range of cheeses, free-range meats, locally caught seafood, truffles, organic fruits and vegetables and increasingly, speciality foods such as garlic and saffron. Gippsland has some thirty wineries with cellar doors and more than forty farm gate experiences available to the visitor. Restaurants and cafes using fresh local produce are dotted throughout the region providing visitors with a variety of dining options.

Gippsland boasts the largest number of farmers markets in Victoria. Monthly farmers markets are held at Maffra, Warragul, Metung, Inverloch, Koonwarra, Drouin, Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale, as well as at numerous smaller towns across the region.

- Gippsland is well placed to capitalise on the global growth of nature-based and soft adventure tourism given its outstanding national parks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, Marine Coastal Parks and Ramsar Wetlands, along with its many walking, hiking and cycling trails.

The region's outstanding water ways and established marine services industry provide significant opportunity to strengthen the destination's appeal as one of Australia's leading boating and fishing destinations. Signature accommodation around the Gippsland Lakes or floating accommodation on the lakes also offers potential.

- Gippsland has deep roots and connections with the agricultural sector, particularly dairy, beef and lamb production. A significant opportunity exists to elevate the regional food and wine as a totally unique Gippsland experience that cannot be easily replicated in other areas of regional Victoria.

- Sustainable tourism is an important aspect to ensure the protection of the outstanding natural and cultural values of the region. As a first step government and industry should be aiming to provide best practice sustainable tourism. Initiatives that encourage the tourism industry to become more sustainable are important considerations.

Social activities, outdoor nature, and active sports, dominate the reasons why people travel to the Greater Gippsland region

- This new brand platform will allow the positioning of the region to be closer to what consumers want and move it from 'nature only' to nature plus food, wine, culture and events. The positioning has been developed taking into consideration all the insights from consumer research that show that Gippsland does not necessarily have high recognition as a place to visit outside of those who are already visiting the region. The new brand provides a road map for Gippsland to ensure it lives, breathes, and innovates to achieve the growth opportunities.
- The Hero experiences could generate 235,500 additional visitor nights and increase visitor expenditure by \$49.2million each year. Under a high growth scenario visitor expenditure is likely to increase by \$80 million per annum.”

The Destination Gippsland – Towards 2030. Gippsland Destination Management Plan document:

- Clearly identifies a vision for Gippsland – East Gippsland. It holds a vision of ‘**no harm**’ to the environment and all its bio-diversity systems, its culture, established business are equal entrants for improved business and financial security (not selective business);
- Promotion of the ‘natural waterways’ such as the Lakes System as identified in my Objection 1, will be at risk – we do not want ‘border restrictions’ from Gippsland into East Gippsland by potential tourism and visitors due to environmental risks to the Mitchell River, water supplies and rich agricultural settings. Mining is not a tourist attraction.
- The ‘multiple affect’ of the tourist dollar, will support a range of our food, wine, and event promotions – centred on benefiting a significantly greater number of ‘stakeholders’ in this vision of benefits for East Gippsland.
- As identified Gippsland (inclusive of East Gippsland) has elements of challenge and struggle without injection of this new vision.
- The *Lindenow & District Community Plan* is complemented by The Destination Gippsland model. In fact, the *Lindenow & District Community Plan* was not inclusive of information that indicated that this community would have a mine. Agreements between a community

and the Government bodies that participant in the formulation of such plans, must carry accountability of their bidding intentions and/or statements of support.

Let it not be minimised, avoided, or forgotten, that Lindenow is 500 metres downwind from the mining site proposed.

Can we add more uncertainty into this Region with a mining venture, that has a 'shelf life' and potentially a long-term or even permanent' impact on the quality of air, water, risk to the essential nature of this area or visitors and residents?

This Mining Project places at risk the estimated returns into Gippsland communities, from tourism, with real or perceived loss/damage to 'its natural and untouched nature.'

The perception of people is expressed in choices and in behaviours. The perception that East Gippsland is **not as attractive** will add to the decline of economic returns to this community if this mining proceeds. I do not wish for East Gippsland to become a tourist attraction destination, as a historical mining town.

The *Destination Gippsland – Towards 2030. Gippsland Destination Management Plan* document clearly is about the promotion of **World Class Natural Sanctuary – Rivers and Coastal Paradise, Paddock and Ocean Produce, Inspired Adventure Vibrant Local Communities**. This mining venture will potentially harm East Gippsland's tourism vision and income to businesses. Whilst other regions in Gippsland may benefit – this may be short lived. KOPL has licencing into the Shire of Wellington, not just the Shire of East Gippsland.

Can an infinite guarantee be given that the tourism experience and financial returns to East Gippsland would be greater from this venture? How can such a guarantee be framed in view of the outlined risks of mining?

The tourism and health of East Gippsland measured in sustainable financial health, diverse employability, attraction and participation in the growth of the hospitality sector and all that this brings, is only attainable when investment of funds goes into visions of sustainability, environment and preservation that will cause **no harm any party**.

I repeat and plea the truth of content in the statement from the mining industry .. (Sourced: www.mining-international.org)

"It's also been found that even as jobs in mines are automated or increasingly require technological expertise that may be beyond the scope of local communities to provide.. "

If there are any direct/indirect employment benefits – it is likely to be short-term/ or for the life of this singular event only.

I cannot express strongly enough not to place East Gippsland at risk of not investing in sustainable financial and economic gains for this substantial community of Victoria's Gippsland Region.

SUMMARY

The Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project – including mining of rare-earths is a project that would provide a resource for the benefits of commercial adventures, that would and could benefit many – but East Gippsland is NOT THE PLACE to seek out these commercial outcomes.

This mining project holds the risk of harm to the environment, sustainable business development and growth across many sectors, inclusive of hospitality, primary industry and agriculture and tourism and the community of East Gippsland.

This mining project is built, in my view, on an assault of two significant principles. I do not wish to be witness, at a time in the future, where I read about an inquiry into the operations of Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd, due to its failure to abide by it's contractual terms, industrial accidents, a failure to disclose data/information that has contributed to the harm and viability of the East Gippsland community and it's natural bio-diversity residents – our wildlife – or in fact, any other issue yet not evident, all of which equate to **harm if not negligent to act appropriately in the face of evidence.**

This mining project, by the nature of having an EES, supports that mining are ventures built on environmental, health and community risks. Risks that often occur in more isolated and desolate locations than in the heart of a community, such as what will be occurring if this project proceeds.

This mining project is not immune to the general fall-out of mining.

The environmental impact of mining is and would be closely aligned to East Gippsland demise.

“Environmental impacts of mining can occur at local, regional, and global scales through direct and indirect mining practices. Impacts can result in **erosion, sinkholes, loss of biodiversity, or the contamination of soil, groundwater, and surface water** by the chemicals emitted from mining processes. These processes also have an impact on the atmosphere from the emissions of carbon which have effect on the quality of human health and biodiversity.”

Erosion of exposed hillsides, mine dumps, **tailings dams** and resultant **siltation** of drainages, creeks and rivers can significantly impact the surrounding areas, a prime example being the giant **Ok Tedi Mine** in Papua New Guinea.

In wilderness areas mining may cause destruction of **ecosystems** and habitats, and in areas of farming it may disturb or destroy productive grazing and croplands.

A **sinkhole** at or near a mine site is typically caused from the failure of a mine roof from the extraction of resources, weak overburden or geological discontinuities. The overburden at the mine site can develop cavities in the subsoil or rock, which can infill with sand and soil

from the overlying strata. These cavities in the overburden have the potential to eventually cave in, forming a sinkhole at the surface. The sudden failure of earth creates a large depression at the surface without warning, this can be seriously hazardous to life and property.

...unnaturally high concentrations of chemicals, such as arsenic, sulfuric acid, and mercury over a significant area of surface or subsurface water. With large amounts of water used for mine drainage, mine cooling, aqueous extraction, and other mining processes, increases the potential for these chemicals to contaminate ground and surface water.

As mining produces copious amounts of wastewater, disposal methods are limited due to contaminants within the wastewater. Runoff containing these chemicals can lead to the devastation of the surrounding vegetation. The dumping of the runoff in surface waters or in a lot of forests is the worst option.

The contamination of watersheds resulting from the leakage of chemicals also has an effect on the health of the local population.

Adverse effects can be observed long after the end of the mine activity. Destruction or drastic modification of the original site and **anthropogenic** substances release can have major impact on biodiversity in the area. Destruction of the habitat is the main component of biodiversity losses, but direct poisoning caused by mine-extracted material, and indirect poisoning through food and water, can also affect animals, vegetation and microorganisms.

Habitat modification such as pH and temperature modification disturb communities in the surrounding area. Endemic species (endemic species is a species which is restricted geographically to a particular area) are especially sensitive since they require very specific environmental conditions. Destruction or slight modification of their habitat put them at the risk of extinction. Habitats can be damaged when there is not enough terrestrial product as well as by non-chemical products, such as large rocks from the mines that are discarded in the surrounding landscape with no concern for impacts on natural habitat.

Mining processes produce an excess of waste materials known as **tailings**. The materials that are left over are a result of separating the valuable fraction from the uneconomic fraction of ore. These large amounts of waste are a mixture of water, sand, clay, and residual bitumen. Tailings are commonly stored in tailings ponds made from naturally existing valleys or large engineered dams and dyke systems. Tailings ponds can remain part of an active mine operation for 30-40 years.

Tailings have great potential to damage the environment by releasing toxic metals by acid mine drainage or by damaging aquatic wildlife; these both require constant monitoring and treatment of water passing through the dam. However, the greatest danger of tailings ponds is dam failure. Tailings ponds are typically formed by locally derived fills (soil, coarse waste, or overburden from mining operations and tailings) and the dam walls are often built up on to sustain greater amounts of tailings. ... the tailings ponds are what put the environment at risk for flooding from the tailing's ponds.

East Gippsland has experienced concerns regarding tailing dams and seepage into rivers/waterways. The Benambra district is an example. The concern is that governmental authorities, who are guardianships of our environment, are actively not meeting this mandated function.

See Appendix of Media Release.

Humans are also affected by mining. There are many diseases that can come from the pollutants that are released into the air and water during the mining process.

Furthermore, one of the biggest subset of mining that impacts humans is the pollutants that end up in the water, which results in **poor water quality**. About 30% of the world has access to renewable freshwater which is used by industries that generate large amounts of waste containing chemicals in various concentrations that are deposited into the freshwater. The concern of active chemicals in the water can pose a great risk to human health as it can accumulate within the water and fishes.”

(Sourced: www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_impact_of_mining)

Do we precisely know the composition of the ore body that will be the by-product of this mining project?

What exactly was asked to be investigated as the EES, which I deem to be questionable due to the presented conflict of interest?

Can we be assured that the tailing dam proposed, within the ground walls of clay and earth, will not seep into the ground and eventually find a natural pathway into our water services and supplies?

CLOSURE

I have endeavoured to support my objections with research and evidence.

I would like the opportunity to thank the members of the Inquiry for considering my concerns as a resident of the East Gippsland community, but foremost as a responsible contributor of preserving our natural resources for the wellbeing of future generations to come.

Kind Regards

Joanna Aquila

Attachment: Appendix: Conversion from PDF file to Word results in some changes in the format of the original file. May not look exactly the same.

Management Plan

A Blueprint for Growth

Foreword

The Gippsland Regional Partnership is one of nine Regional Partnerships across the state. Established by the Victorian Government in 2016, Regional Partnerships recognise that local communities are in the best position to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by regions.

Over the past three years, including at three Regional Assemblies, the Partnership has engaged with hundreds of local people across every Gippsland municipality.

The visitor economy, or tourism, has been a common priority identified by the community at these Regional Assemblies, and through our ongoing consultation processes.

Advocating for the development of a Destination Management Plan was one of the Partnership's first priority projects. We were delighted to secure funds from the Victorian Government to see this important tourism document come to fruition.

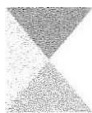
Tourism is an important industry for Gippsland. It generates an estimated \$1 billion for our local economy. The region attracted a record seven million visitors in the year ending March 2019.

This Plan will be the first step in identifying opportunities to strengthen our tourism offerings, lift visitor numbers and improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of Gippsland.

Accompanying the Plan is the larger Regional Tourism Review. The Victorian Government is currently undertaking the Review to identify opportunities to enhance the value of tourism in regional Victoria. Combined, these projects will ensure sustainable growth of the visitor economy and build on the wonderful region that is Gippsland.

Congratulations to Destination Gippsland and TRC Tourism who have developed an aspirational plan to strengthen the region. We can't wait to see more visitors discover there are all kinds of wonder to be found in Gippsland.

Maree McPherson
Chair, Gippsland Regional Partnership



5. Strategic Priorities for Growing Gippsland's Visitor Economy

There is a need to consider how to better market the region's greatest assets; how best to deliver on a brand that reflects the diversity of the region and provide a competitive advantage; and how to attract the level of investment required to enhance the tourism industry. This will require strong leadership, focused marketing, new experiences and quality infrastructure.

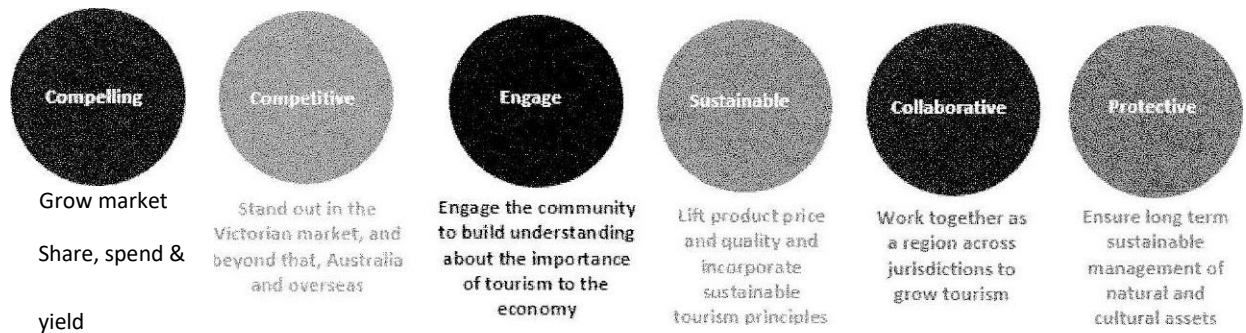
The first step is to unify industry and community toward a common vision. Gippsland offers authentic experiences to its visitors as do other destinations, what it lacks is transformational experiences that inspire the world to visit, when people experience transformational moments, they almost always point to a specific moment or memory. Therefore, transformational experiences, or life changing moments, must include a ritual, shared experience or other kind of "crossing the threshold" moment people can later use as their anchor memory the defining moment they continue to recall and share with others. This is what the region should offer.

Therefore, the vision for the region is:

Vision

Gippsland's natural beauty, outstanding experiences and life changing moments inspire the world to visit

To achieve this vision Gippsland needs to be:



Goal Grow the value of tourism to Gippsland by increasing the number of visitors, length of stay and spend in the region



Strategic Priorities

1. Collaborative and effective leadership and governance across industry and community	2. Strengthen Gippsland's appeal as a destination through brand awareness and co-ordinated marketing	3. Develop Gippsland's experiences that encourage new and existing markets to visit, stay and spend	4. Invest in diverse and exciting regional events	5. Invest in place-making to support the visitor economy	6. Revitalise visitor servicing across the region	7. Create industry partnerships to foster and grow the Gippsland visitor economy.
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Actions Each strategy has a suite of actions, identified that aim to increase leadership, visitation, average length of stay, yield, customer satisfaction, and repeat/referral visitations throughout the year and into the future.

Values

Research indicates that Gippsland has three key value attributes that define the content and product offering and add value and depth to the region's story. These values are grounded, serendipity and quirkiness.

Serendipity

When a destination is not well known there is the Opportunity to have moments of serendipity that are worth Sharing with your friends. Surprise and delight is an opportunity For the destination to allow people to discover the region and be Surprised. This also links back to a global trend that the market is Seeking moments of surprise – that unexpected moment. This is a real opportunity to uncover the 'gems' of Gippsland.

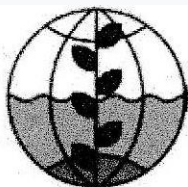
Grounded

The experience that a visitor Can have in the Gippsland region can Be unpretentious and humble. Whether that is The beauty of the forest and the story of the Snowy River, the sense of being the only person on 90mile beach, the heritage and history and the power of mother nature is a reminder of how small we can be and can provide us with some humility. This also links back to growing trend of transformative travel you can learn something new about you or a place.

Quirkiness

It is stories about the place and the characters not just the tourism experiences. Little places with big stories is a growing trend. Destination Gippsland is well positioned to take advantage of. Gippsland has to identify and uncover new stories, not the obvious or what is usually used in destination marketing. It could be the smallest event, shopping experience or a local fisherman that their stories can offer the biggest 'out through' the market.

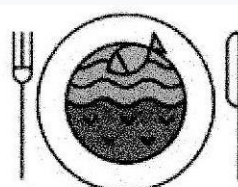
Building on the strategic brand framework, Gippsland has a unique opportunity to provide experiences that are distinctive to the region and have the potential to deliver these brand values for the visitor. This brand framework provides Gippsland's tourism industry a focus for its marketing effort and the development of new products and experiences.



World Class Natural Sanctuary



Rivers and Coastal Paradise



Paddock and Ocean Produce



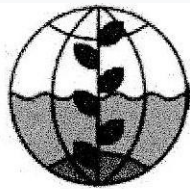
Inspired Adventure



Vibrant Local Communities

Creating outstanding experiences

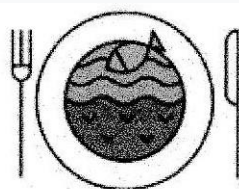
Results from a combination of the Product Audit review and an extensive community and industry consultation process on potential product/experiences identified a range of opportunities that will help broaden and deepen the visitor experience in Gippsland, keeping visitors in the destination longer and spending more. The experiences need to be consistent with the current brand position for Gippsland and leverage off the primary marketing focus of the destination and the five experience themes:



World Class
Natural Sanctuary



Rivers and
Coastal Paradise



Paddock and
Ocean Produce



Inspired
Adventure



Vibrant Local
Communities

Hero experiences

These are exceptional experiences (whether existing or aspirational) that:

- Provide a destination with a real competitive advantage over other destinations
- Focus on what is truly unique, memorable or engaging about a destination
- Meet the needs of the identified target markets.

Supporting experiences

These are experiences that are important across the region, either to strengthen the overall visitor experience or for the local community. No one experience is going to change the trajectory of the visitor economy in Gippsland in the short term. There is a need to progress a range of improvements that deliver on the brand positioning, create awareness of the destination, and encourage dispersal across the region. The recommended hero and supporting experiences for Gippsland are summarised in the following table and described in more detail in Section 8 with associated investment and benefits. Some of these experiences are achievable in the short term, some are highly aspirational, and they can be game changers. The experiences will be delivered by a combination of public and private sector investment. Each experience complements the many current tourism products available across the region, to ensure that future growth

forecasts are realised. Collectively, the potential impact of the hero experiences is estimated to be significant. For example, under a low growth scenario, it is estimated that the hero experiences could generate 235,500 additional visitor nights and increase visitor expenditure by \$49.2million each year. Under a high growth scenario visitor expenditure is likely to increase by \$80 million per annum.

Hero and Supporting Experiences

Refer to Section 8 for more detail on the below projects, associated investment and benefits.

Experience Theme	Hero Experiences	Support Experiences
<p>World Class Sanctuary</p>	<p>Wilsons Promontory A New Future Wilsons Promontory National Park is one of the stunning natural assets of Gippsland and easily accessible from Melbourne as well as from Phillip Island. As one of the iconic natural sanctuaries in Gippsland, Wilsons Promontory needs to be fit for purpose for the modern visitor. The offer will be led through the development of an iconic sanctuary that delivers world class conservation outcomes while presenting the park in a new and improved way to visitors using adaptive planning that considers such things as carrying capacity during the busy periods and accessible tourism facilities in Tidal River. Consideration of the Circuit Walk and its operating model is important to ensure that it remains current, while acknowledging that the management plan may preclude some options.</p> <p>Buchan Caves Visitor Experiences An exciting Visitor Experience Hub at Buchan Caves will transform the current Offer and create a compelling destination that is adapted to meet contemporary visitor expectations.</p>	<p>Gabo Island The Gabo Island experience will showcase to the world this remarkable natural sanctuary where the view is unobscured, and the sea life is wild. The project will see an upgrade of lighthouse keepers' accommodation as the base for a two-night premium wildlife experience as well as developing a rodent free sanctuary for the wildlife that people come to see.</p> <p>Raymond Island Koala Sanctuary This experience will showcase koalas in their natural habitat and could involve Gunaikurnai as well as conservation with expert programs at a Koala and Wildlife Shelter in partnership with a recognised conservation brand or attraction.</p> <p>Experiencing Gippsland's Great Outdoors The opportunity to be immersed in nature and the outdoors in Gippsland provides a huge range of opportunities for growth. While this plan outlines some specific examples as hero or support experiences, this experience flows through the forests, parks, jointly managed parks and other natural areas of Gippsland.</p>
<p>Rivers and Coastal Paradise</p>	<p>Coastal Wilderness Walk The development of an iconic experience-based trail on Victoria's Wilderness Coast, predominantly within Croajingolong National Park offering fully serviced (glamping' or accommodation (party Off park), self-guided or fully supported options with tour operators show case one of Australia's most exciting and wild coastlines. The proposal, also links in with the destination hub proposed for Point Hicks with the improved visitor offer accommodation and service upgrades necessary.</p> <p>George Bass Coastal Walk The southern Gippsland Coast between Phillip Island and Inverloch has the potential to be one of the great coastal experiences in Australia leveraging existing accommodation in local towns and villages as well as showcasing the proposed Bass Coast Marine and Coastal Park.</p>	<p>Wild River Journey — Mitchell River Lodge / Glamping Following the Mitchell River as it winds its way down the gorge, visitors would enjoy a guided walking and rafting experience with storytelling, gourmet meals using regional produce, and the comfort and style of lodge or luxury tent. This park is jointly managed by the Gunaikurnai people.</p> <p>Boating and Ocean Journeys Added to the wonderful natural setting most coastal villages and towns exist in, and a range of services, Gippsland is well positioned to grow its boating offer through improved facilities and services, From Mallacoota to San Rerno, and at the locations in between, better boating access provides opportunities for the growing boating markets both from within Gippsland and from Melbourne.</p>

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(continues onto Page 42 due to PDF conversion).

<p>Paddock and Ocean Produce</p>	<p>Lakes Entrance Marine Precinct The area has the potential to be lifted from a commercial centre to an array of marine and take activities where you can be assured that the catch of the day will be available from the jetty, where the visitor facilities showcase the Lake environs and the entrance to Bass Strait</p> <p>Destination Restaurant in Gippsland A destination restaurant is one that has a strong enough appeal to draw customers from beyond its community and create demand from both domestic and international markets.</p>	<p>The Pinot Coast The Pinot Coast Project is creating a competitive and recognised brand and visitor experience around a 'one wine tourism proposition' that is single minded in its marketing focus on Pinot Noir and is aiming for a leadership position for this variety in the world market.</p> <p>Destination Fishing and Fishing Villages Catching fish provides people with a huge sense of achievement and the ability to eat their own catch which for many urban based people is a significant experience. If you cannot catch a fish or do not want to, then the ability to buy a fish direct from a trawler or shop in a seaside village is the next best thing. Providing access and facilities to achieve this will grow the demand for the sport and for the produce.</p> <p>Paddock & Ocean Produce Gippsland's produce is world class - a growth in products from the food grown in Gippsland would see a value add and a likely increase in return on investment for farmers as well as creating a significant experience across the region for visitors and residents alike. One element of showcasing Gippsland's produce is to hold an annual event bringing the chefs of Australia and the world to Gippsland and connect food producers with chefs and consumers.</p>
<p>Inspired Adventure</p>	<p>Mount Baw Baw Adventures A strong year offering based on family alpine adventures and outdoor active pursuits such as walking, cycling mountain biking and photography also requires sound base infrastructure.</p> <p>Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail the Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail experience with potential} Gunaikurnai involvement takes in the magnificent coastline, estuaries, beaches, views, Aboriginal history and local produce of the region. This self-guided or exclusive, fully serviced and catered experience become a distinctive experience for nature and culture adventure-based tourism that could take advantage of private property inholdings around the lakes.</p>	<p>Creating the Central Gippsland Mountain Biking Hub With Haunted Hills MTB park at the centre of this 'hub' visitors will have the choice of staying in a central location and riding one of many MTB parks within 30 minutes' drive. It creates a unique offering and diversity that other destinations do not have.</p> <p>Tail Trees Ride This project proposes the development of a bespoke trail for mountain biking in the forested foothills of West Gippsland close to the timber towns of Noojee, Neerim and Powelltown (outside Gippsland).</p> <p>Developing Gippsland's Trail Network The Gippsland Trail Feasibility Study has identified several strategic trail corridor extensions that would, if built, form a 'trail spine' through Gippsland from Melbourne's outer eastern growth suburbs and rail corridor in the west to Orbost in the east. Other 'trail' developments could also provide an outstanding network.</p> <p>Making Gippsland Australia's Preferred 4WD Adventure Region Gippsland has a natural advantage in Victoria and more broadly in Australia with the Australian Alps and foothills providing the perfect terrain, landscape and setting for responsible 4WD adventures, and outdoor activities including remote camping, driving, touring and associated activities such as walking.</p> <p>Omeo Adventure Hub This project will see Omeo develop as a nationally recognised alpine and high-country adventure hub. The centre piece will be the Omeo Mountain Bike Hub feeding directly into the town centre. Additional features will include potential to fish, horse ride, raft, and do other adventure activities aligned to the high-country theme,</p>

Vibrant
Local
Comm
unities

Touring Memories

Drive tourism is vital in facilitating regional dispersal and access to the region's many and varied visitor experiences. Itineraries will enable visitors to become aware of the breadth of the regional offering and encourage repeat visits to specific places they discover or to explore further.

Positioning the Yiti3ges of Gippsland

Visitors travelling around the region are looking for opportunities to stop and experience the local and authentic nature of Gippsland. This can contribute to the overall experience of people traveling through the region and encourage greater dispersal, spend and positive feedback. This project will support the development of drive journeys and capitalise on the unique villages and towns of Gippsland and all they have to offer.

(Continues onto Pag 43)

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(Continues onto Page 44 due to PDF Conversion – format impacted),

Cross Cutting Experiences

There is a range of Gippsland experiences and products that are considered cross-cutting experiences these are opportunities that may be appropriate under any one of the experience themes:

Aboriginal tourism experiences

Aboriginal culture belongs to Aboriginal people, who are best positioned to determine the content and any interpretation of culturally based tourism,

Gunaikurnai, Bunurong and Wurundjeri people all have an interest in Gippsland. Gunaikurnai hold Native Title over much of Gippsland, have a Recognition Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria, and are a Registered Aboriginal Party responsible for cultural heritage. Gunaikurnai are joint managers of ten national parks and reserves with Parks Victoria.

Opportunities for development in Gippsland include:

- Partnerships: between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses can potentially address business development challenges (see the partnership section of this DMP for further information)
 - Participation: Aboriginal people in mainstream tourism ventures
 - Mentoring and training: The provision of mentoring and training services to Aboriginal businesses is required on an ongoing rather than a one-off basis. These services could cover a range of areas including product development, planning and marketing
 - Marketing and awareness: There is a need to make it easier for people to learn about Aboriginal culture through the vehicle of tourism
 - Investigate options for more guided Aboriginal nature walks, guided tours, cultural talks and travelling exhibitions
- Investigating park products in the Gunaikurnai joint managed Parks, including the potential of a cultural centre at Tarra-Bulga National Parke

Regional produce

Gippsland is renowned for the quality of much of its produce. Consumers around Australia are slowly being introduced to the produce showcasing a Gippsland brand. Recent additions to the providence labels include Gippsland jersey, high quality rich and creamy milk, a welcome addition to cheeses such as Jindivick and Maffra, as well as prime beef, lamb and seafood. it is becoming more common to see Gippsland Beef or Prime Gippsland Lamb on the menus of some of Australia's best restaurants.

Gippsland's food and fibre industry is set to continue its growth and market presence with the establishment of Food & Fibre Gippsland. Food Fibre Gippsland is building upon the region's strengths and unique talents to promote, influence and create positive outcomes for the whole of the food and fibre sector in Gippsland. The Latrobe Valley's Authority is working closely with Food & Fibre Gippsland to provide new opportunities to Gippsland producers and businesses operating within the food and fibre sector. Recent support has been provided to Gippsland Jersey, Maffra Cheese, Toms Cap Vineyard, Gippsland Natural Beef and Sailors Grave Brewing to grow their businesses.

With the movement of markets seeking information on food providence, sustainable harvesting and farming, and appropriate labelling, Gippsland has an opportunity to position itself in a market seeking the produce it has. Paddock to the Plate often seeks to remove the middle person in a supply chain with farmers and producers selling direct to restaurants and consumers.

While taking produce to the world is a common approach to building a brand for high quality food and wine, this project seeks to bring the best in the world to Gippsland. The project seeks Destination Gippsland to develop a partnership with Food & Fibre Gippsland and other food and wine producers to develop a program to bring some of the world's great chefs to the region to cook locally with local produce. The event can be Gippsland wide and would also seek to showcase Gippsland wines. it would also be run in concert with Gippsland's finest restaurants to help ensure that the brand of local restaurants grows as does the brand of produce. The event would not only seek to directly link the great produce of the region with the chefs and restaurateurs of Australia and other parts of the world, it would continue to position Gippsland's brand and positioning aligned to this DMP and the other marketing campaigns.

Adrenalin experiences

This plan has several references to experiences that offer visitors an adrenalin experience, for example the proposed National White-Water Adventure Park and the Gippsland Motorsport Complex, that is, they are adventure based and offered to a range of user groups, skill levels and activities. Gippsland has a strong opportunity to grow this market. Work underway in the

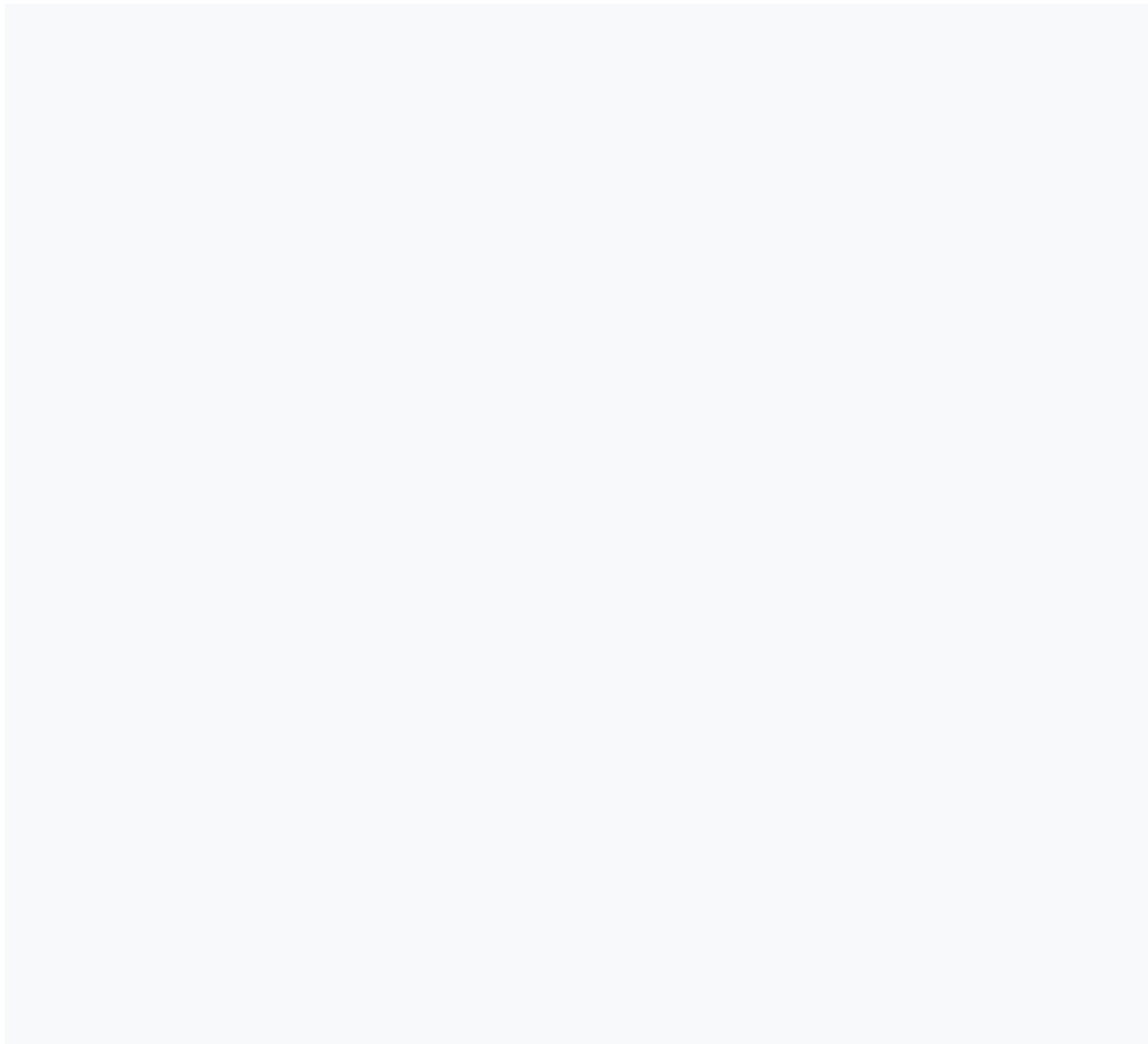
Latrobe Valley on adventure sports, sporting infrastructure and support services aligns with product; on offer elsewhere in Gippsland, This includes a range of snow sports, water sports, motor racing, a proposed new cable water ski park at Lardner Park and other adventures. While the new experiences are described in the experience pillar, the theme also runs generally through many of the experience pillars and destination hubs.

Heritage

Gippsland has a rich history and many of the destination hubs contain historical sites, buildings and other products that small but important markets seek out when visiting. The mining history of the area, coupled with the rich history in agriculture, fishing, timber production and other forms of resource utilisation, coupled with elements of living history remain important and where possible can be woven into the experience pillars in this plan.

Several of Gippsland's heritage themes are expressed in strong tourism offerings that continue to provide attractions to visitors. Walhalla is a living historical town with modern services that provides visitors with experiences including access to original gold mining tunnels and tours, historical buildings and a streetscape that breathes history.

For thousands of years Gippsland was home to many proud and strong indigenous communities. The stories of the region's history can be found in collections held by volunteer historical societies, museums and Keeping Places. Heritage and culture tourism are complimentary to many of the touring opportunities.



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DESTINATION HUB

Gippsland Lakes

The Gippsland Lakes and adjoining wetlands occupy approximately 600km² in a catchment that comprises almost 10% Of the land area of Victoria (GRP, 2015) and represents the largest inland lake system in the southern hemisphere. A significant number of visitors to the region enjoy aquatic experiences (fishing and boating) as part of their trip (13% of day trip visitors and 23% of overnight visitors). In addition to water-based activities, the Gippsland Lakes provide access to the Lakes National Park, Ninety Mile Beach and Loch Sport.

Both the maritime services industry and the tourism industry play a critical role in the local economies of Lakes Entrance, Paynesville, Loch Sport and Metung with the maritime services industry providing year-round economic activity and tourism providing peak period economic activity. The Port of Sale is an important area forming the start of the Lake system, and a strong commercial precinct attractive to visitors and residents alike.

Opportunity

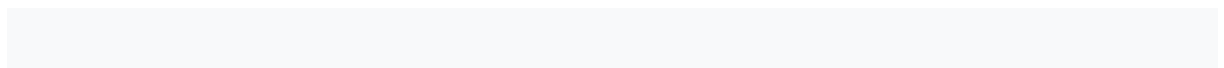
- The hero experiences for this part of the Gippsland Lakes will be the Lakes Entrance growth strategy, master planning and marine upgrade, Raymond Island Koala Experience, Signature Restaurant and Gippsland Lakes Aquatic trail with signature accommodation. Supporting experiences will include game fishing, Gippsland lakes accommodation and potentially Aboriginal tourism.
- As part of the government's commitment to return the Gippsland Lakes to recreational fishing and the cancellation of commercial fishing licences, a redevelopment of the Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Cooperative will see a revitalised public area including Bullock Island and a new fish café. • Improving the Raymond Island koala experience could see upgraded and new walking tracks, interpretation, a digital guide for smartphone use and viewing areas- An art project at Raymond island and Paynesville using koalas as the theme to further promote this attraction is currently being discussed by the local business association.
- New entrants into the restaurant market in Paynesville and other areas are showing that the market exists for quality restaurants built off local produce. Continuing to develop destination restaurants will drive new markets and support businesses including accommodation.
- The Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail has been proposed for some time. Complementary work in the Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study provides a more detailed summary of this exciting opportunity.
- Gunaikurnai have a rich and proud history as the traditional owners of the Gippsland Lakes area. Developing Aboriginal based cultural tourism in the Lakes, should Gunaikurnai wish to pursue this, would be very attractive in the marketplace, • Showcasing Sate as the closest point of the Lake system to Melbourne markets, and a vibrant hub that includes the Port of Sale building and other visitor services, including the potential to travel downstream through the Lake system by boat.
- The Lakes are inaccessible for many people without a boat. Developing a water-based resort on the Lakes would activate the Lake and provide contemporary market aligned accommodation that supports other experiences,

Investment

The attraction of these hero and supporting experiences will need to be supported by continued investment in key assets to enhance the appeal of Lakes Entrance, Metung, Loch Sport and Paynesville. Some of these investments have been identified in master plans prepared by East Gippsland Council and together with private sector investment these projects will significantly improve the appeal of these destinations for visitors. The following infrastructure improvements specifically relevant to improving visitor facilities in these towns are:

- The Esplanade/Boardwalk that links the fishing boat precinct to the beach, Bullock island redevelopment and an exceptional lookout with restaurants and cafes would enhance Lakes Entrance as a destination with unique character. Improvement works within the town centre to further improve pedestrian access between the commercial/retail area and the foreshore areas as identified in the Lakes Entrance Master Plan. Projects such as waterfront cafes, swimming pontoons and visitor interpretation centre identified in the plan will significantly improve facilities for visitors. Implementation of the Metung Master Plan focusing on village development and opportunities for private sector investment that leverage off the proposed Metung Hot springs and Wellness spa
- Provision of quality infrastructure, providing for contemporary & innovative design, allowing for appropriate placement and providing for diversity in experience and appeal with pedestrian linkages and improved signage consistent with the Paynesville Foreshore Management Plan, 2017

- Walking tracks and lookouts, incorporating short walks and links to the Gippsland Trails Strategy in each of the precincts including associated interpretation
- Boat ramps, jetties and car/trailer parking to support marine and boating experiences
- Strategies that encourage operators to invest in products and experiences that appeal to the target markets and changing consumer expectations is critical to retain existing and attract new markets and increase yield. The type of accommodation has an impact on the delivery of tourism, perceptions and opportunities for growth. It will be challenging to build a year-round offer in a destination that is heavily dependent on holiday parks and camping accommodation such as Lakes Entrance. Operators will need encouragement and guidance to undertake accommodation upgrades that will match future market demand and that are in-line with a destination's future product offering in order to achieve year-round occupancy.



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DESTINATION HUB

Gippsland's High Country

Gippsland has outstanding high country and experiences that have developed over many years. Towns such as Omeo, Dargo, Licola all provide visitors with not only a sense of living mountain culture, but also the important element of provisioning, information and visitor servicing.

Omeo has a strong historical link to the high country through gold mining, mountain cattlemen and more recently, skiing and other forms of adventure.

Drive tourism is vital to feeder towns such as Orbost where the Snowy River drive takes visitors to McKillip's Bridge and deep into the East Gippsland mountains, and Heyfield where visitors can branch off to Licola and Dargo.

Touring routes such as the Great Alpine Road link visitors with neighbouring regions such as the North East and provide an important link to Mount Hotham.

Investment in the Omeo Mountain Bike Hub continues and will see a world class facility developed. This coupled with the history of the area and the adventure tourism opportunities position Omeo well into the future.

The high country also provides significant camping and 4WD opportunities as well as the base for much of Victoria's remote and challenging hiking offer. The Falls to Hotham walk development will also provide a strong element to the neighbouring area and in summer through the linkages to the Bogong High Plains and Falls Creek.

Deer hunting is very popular in Gippsland and continuing to invest in access and facilities including appropriate camping to support deer hunting provides an increasing opportunity.

Victoria's 4WD adventures are at home in the Alps with many of the State and country's foremost drives and adventures on offer including the Wonnangatta Valley, Davie Plains and the Snowy River.

Investment

- Invest in the development of strong planning for Omeo (underway) and the implementation of the Omeo Adventure Hub.
- Invest in drive-based tourism facilities and information to support high country drives such as the Licola, Dargo and Snowy River Drive.
- Develop partnerships with neighbouring regions including NE Victoria to capitalise on developments underway outside Gippsland,
- Invest in Local Destination Action planning and experience development to aid smaller high-country towns

Investing in National Parks and Public Lands – Camping

The planned improvements and expansion of current campground facilities, new campgrounds and improved access to the region's national and state parks and public lands, will develop and encourage increases in visitation to the Gippsland region. This will generate financial and social benefits and visitors will be invigorated to stay longer within the region and have a better story to tell to promote word of mouth. Activation is about access, the quality of amenities and increasing awareness.

Camping is a holiday tradition for many Victorians and an important part of Victoria's tourism industry. Camping and recreation in Victoria's State and National Parks is **worth \$2.1 billion to the Victorian economy each year** and supports 20,400 jobs around the state.

The Gippsland region can improve camping facilities by:

- Upgrading current facilities at major attraction sites
- improving the links to, and quality of, walking tracks, cycle routes and 4WD trails
- Investigate options for new campgrounds along popular driving routes
- Review the cost of camping fees and allocation of sites in accordance with the state government pricing policy announced at the time of this plan aiming to make parks more affordable for Victorians and visitors,

There is a need to create a network of high value and high yield products to meet and exceed the expectations of target markets. Nature based tourism forms a significant component of Australia's visitor economy, ranking among top travel motivators for domestic and international visitors.

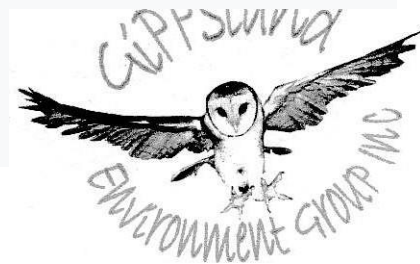
Delivering on the positioning and the themes of the region, Gippsland Will require growth in the range of nature and adventure experiences to diversify what is currently on offer within its state and national parks. Whilst planned investment in walks and mountain biking will contribute, there is a need for additional types of activities and more commercial business offerings. An important part of experiencing a destination is the lookout and viewing opportunities, a safe place to take photos and capture memories. Promoting active experiences in nature and specialty producers of the region will diversify the visitor experience and encourage longer stays.

Complementary to increasing nature based and adventure experiences is the types of accommodation available within or close to state and national parks. Whilst camping amenities should be upgraded, so too should the type of accommodation on offer, from eco-pods and cabins to five-star anchor accommodation.

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Appendix

Media Report by the Gippsland Environmental Group Inc.



Monday 29 July, 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

Stockman Project: Work Plan — Mining Regulator Ignores Risks to Tambo River and Gippsland Lakes.

On 17 April 2019 the Victorian mining regulator Earth Resources Regulation approved the Work Plan for Round Oak Minerals' Stockman Project located 16km east of Benambra.

Gippsland Environment Group is seriously concerned about the work plan approval which permits the massive expansion of the old Benambra mine tailings dam known as Lake St Barbara. The tailings dam is constructed right across Straight Creek, a tributary of the Tambo River, and currently contains 700,000 tonnes of toxic tailings. The old Benambra copper and zinc mine operated from 1992-96 until mining company Denehurst abandoned the site.

The steep mountainous country of the upper Tambo River is a completely inappropriate location to construct a huge tailings dam on top of an older, much smaller, and potentially unstable dam. The Stockman project will double the height of the dam wall from the current 20 metres high to up to 45m above the valley floor, and increase the surface area from 8 ha to approx. 35ha, to store up to another seven million tonnes of toxic tailings.

The original tailings dam was constructed in 1992 of rockfill lined with 2 mm thick geomembrane liner to prevent seepage as there was insufficient local clay available to adequately line the inside of the dam wall. This plastic liner has a lifespan of possibly 30 years. A concrete grout curtain installed at the base of the dam has a lifespan of 2-80 years depending on the acidity of the tailings. The newer HDPE plastic liners have a lifespan of only 100-200 years.

The tailings must remain covered with a minimum of 2 metres of water forever to prevent an acid chain reaction occurring and releasing heavy metals into the downstream waterway. If the 700,000 tonnes of tailings currently in the dam became exposed to the air at any time in the next thousand years the resultant oxidation would produce the equivalent of 20,000 tonnes of zinc. The Stockman Project, which plans to operate for nine years, would produce tenfold that volume of tailings. Heavy metals can cause cancer and acute organ damage.

It is outrageous that government authorities can permit any mining company to massively expand a tailings dam located across a waterway when the historic and future dam wall seepage control measures have such a short lifespan relative to the thousand years or more the toxic tailings must remain quarantined from the Tambo River and Gippsland Lakes.

This is an unconscionable burden to leave for future generations to deal with.



Stockman Project - Work Plan approval will permit Round Oak Minerals to double the height of the dam wall, increasing the dam surface area by almost four-fold, in order to store an additional seven million tonnes of mine waste.

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End of Document and Submission.