

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

826

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Angela Hutson

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1:

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

October 27th 2020

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members

Re: Draft EES Scoping Requirements for the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project

I vehemently oppose the mine for the following reasons:

- **Strong local connection**

- I am a 25 year resident of East Gippsland and live in Paynesville. I have been and remain active in a range of regional development activities during this time including but not limited to through being a volunteer member of East Gippsland Shire Economic Development Committee and the State/Federal Government Regional Development Committee. I am also actively involved in supporting the Gunaikurnai people in this region to fulfil their aspirations regarding joint management and caring for country through the "Whole of Country Plan". I have also been an active member of Landcare for the last decade.
- My personal and professional life has been one of caring for the environment, supporting Traditional Owners, building and supporting economic sustainability in our region and preparing our young people for the emerging jobs and employment opportunities for a resilient East Gippsland.

- **Health**

- It is acknowledged by Kalbar that there are radioactive substances being mined including rare-earths. Below ground level and undisturbed these substances do not pose a health risk. It is when they are excavated and crushed that dust is generated, dispersing these materials into the environment; this poses a health risk to current and future generations. Dust travels far, so contamination and ongoing health risks are real concerns. You have a duty of care not to add to the health burdens of a community whether it be cancer, lung conditions or other chronic health conditions.

- **Tourism**

- There will be an impact on tourism as the region is known for its pristine national parks, water ways and rivers and biodiversity. We will lose tourism dollars as people won't want to come to the area.

- **Proximity to families and their livelihoods**

- The mine is on the doorstep to where many families live, farm and work. Notwithstanding the health risks. It is irresponsible for the Government to put the community at risk. I understand that the number of houses near the mine has been under-reported.
- East Gippsland Shire Council's 'Lindenow & District Community Plan' did not foresee a mine in that area. Government needs to recognise the pre-existing residential and agricultural land use. Noise from a mine operating 24 hours a day 7 days a week will be untenable and very stressful, and the noise levels won't be a problem.
- The vegetable industry in the Lindenow Valley is only 500m downwind from the mine with most of the vegetables grown above ground, so dust from the mine is a high risk. I am a vegetarian and always buy local produce which is readily available in outlets in nearby Bairnsdale. I do not want to eat contaminated vegetables.

- **Economic impact**

- The reputation of our vegie growing industry is one of **Clean Green Fresh**. The risk is that our strong and vibrant and global vegetable growing industry could be decimated resulting in big job and financial losses for our region.

- **The science**

- The full analysis of the ore body hasn't been disclosed. It is difficult to trust the information in the EES because we don't know what the bona fides are of the laboratory that was asked to analyse. The real dangers to human/animal health need to be fully disclosed and closely examined because of the risks.

- **Water - our most precious resource**

- Water to irrigate the crops comes from the Mitchell River. The mine is on the other side of the river on top of a plateau. There are risks of the river being contaminated, impacting on the crops, fishing, agriculture, the health of the rivers and the Gippsland Lakes (an important Ramsar-listed wetland).
- Over 3 billion litres of water (3GL) is required by the mine annually for up to 15 years (the maximum life of the mine) for processing and to control dust. This shows how big a problem dust is. What will the impact of this be on bores, aquifers and the Mitchell River? According to irrigation data, if the 3GL of water was redirected to the horticulture industry, 3 times more jobs could be created than proposed by the mine.
- The Woodglen Reservoir where domestic and commercial water is stored for the whole Shire is 3.5kms downwind from the mine. What are the contamination risks? Including those on tank water who live near the mine being at risk of water contamination.

- **Aboriginal cultural heritage**

- Unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are stated as being highly likely to be present and will be impacted. Given the massive excavation down to 45m, it will be impossible to avoid destruction of artefacts and heritage. This is unacceptable. Their mitigation measures will not avoid the obliteration of cultural heritage. Remember Rio Tinto.

- **Environmental Risks**

- There will be a tailings dam 90 hectares in size, that's nearly 1 square km. It will contain mine tailings waste and flocculants (chemicals used to treat the tailings) which have warnings on safety data sheets about being harmful to aquatic life.
- Located on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell Rivers there is a stated risk of leaching from the dam. If there is a 1 in 100-year flood, tailings waste & flocculants could be released into the creeks/rivers, harming aquatic life and aquifers. The risks are considerable and foreseeable given the many examples of dam failures (Benambra example) so the risk of failure can't be low. There are no details in the EES for the dam's construction so how can the risk of failure be low!

- **Habitat**

- With 13 sq. kms of land being mined a lot of trees and habitat will be removed including over 700 large mature trees. Flora and fauna species are threatened. EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area to know the full ramifications of what is at risk. This could mean more loss than reported in the EES. The landscape of the area will never be replaced; offsets can't address this loss.

- **Rehabilitation**

- Full rehabilitation rarely happens. Will progressive rehabilitation actually occur. There is a current example of the Douglas mine at Balmoral in Western Victoria where a toxic waste dump was left behind.
- The risks of no rehabilitation are high if the mine goes into 'care & maintenance' with the tailings dam and 19 dams on gullies/creeks being abandoned. Rehabilitation bonds have been shown to be grossly inadequate to cover costs.

- **Compulsory acquisition of private land**

- It is unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of private land to be used by the mine for infrastructure that is located outside the mining project boundary for: water pipelines, bore pumps, bore field, roadworks, new powerlines, easements, rail siding and vegetation removal. Why wasn't this part of the mine project area? Why isn't this a matter for the EG Shire Council to determine?

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission
Sincerely
ANGELA HUTSON