

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 847

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**Request to be heard?:** Yes

**Full Name:** David Hallett

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:**

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** See attached submission

Dear Panel Advisory members,

Thank you for allowing me to write this submission. I am writing about the EES for the Fingerboards mineral sands project. **I strongly object to the development of this mine.** I have lived all my life (over 60 years) on a farm southeast of the proposed mine site. This is a very special part of East Gippsland, with exceptional farming areas, major river systems, good underground water, natural bushland and the Gippsland Lakes. I do not want to see any of these things destroyed or degraded by the development of a mine, owned and run by overseas companies who have no attachment or obligation to preserving this unique area. My own farm would be exposed to contaminated dust blown in on prevailing winds, and the detrimental effect on groundwater quality and quantity.

One of my major objections to the mine is the contamination of water by dust and direct spillage, which will definitely happen. Water is the lifeblood of all agriculture in the areas surrounding and downwind of the mine. While the land can be extremely productive, East Gippsland is known for its unreliable rainfall patterns. We can get 200 – 300mm in one rainfall event, then next to nothing for 6 months. The saviour for agriculture and essential food production is access to good quality underground water via bores, plus in some places irrigation water from creeks and rivers. Farming in my area, mainly dryland grazing, cannot exist without reliable good quality bore water. During the frequent extended droughts and dry periods our dams dry up, so we are reliant on underground water for livestock and for fire prevention control.

Both silica and radioactive substances (I will call these “contaminants”) will get into the local creeks and rivers. Two rivers of major concern are the Perry River and the Mitchell River. The Perry River is the major recharge for the Boisdale Aquifer, which provides drinking water to the City of Sale and other towns, plus stock, domestic and irrigation water for numerous farms. The Mitchell River is the source of water for the City of Bairnsdale and other smaller towns, and it provides the irrigation water for the multi multimillion dollar vegetable industry in the Lindenow valley. The vegetable industry here produces large quantities of food that is sent around Australia, and it is a major employer for this region. Other food produced in the area is beef, sheepmeat, milk, wine, and crops grown for food and fodder. All these foods will be contaminated by what gets into the water, plus the dust blown across on the prevailing winds directly on to pastures and the crops.

Any contamination of these rivers will have enormous ramifications on well established farms currently producing large amounts of valuable “clean and green” food for hundreds of thousands of people.

The Mitchell River is a major source of water for the Gippsland Lakes system, which is Ramsar protected. Any contamination of the water will end up in the Lake system, with flow on effects to fish stock and the health of people using the Lakes.

The placement of the tailings dam on high ground above the Perry and Mitchell Rivers beggars belief, as there will definitely be leaching into both these rivers. Major floods, which are a regular feature on the Mitchell River (five in the last 30 years) will cause huge problems with contaminants getting directly into the river and consequently into the Lake system. Dam failure will definitely occur at some time, possibly well after the mining company has left the area. Who will then be responsible when the tailings and flocculants are washed into the Mitchell River and the Lake system? What protection will there be to protect people, their animals, their produce, pastures and all wildlife?



This mine will require enormous amounts of water, putting a huge strain on a fragile resource. If the mining company gets access to groundwater licences, I can foresee major problems with groundwater supply to existing licence holders. The Aquifers are already oversubscribed, with farmers unable to increase or get new water licences. Whenever mining companies enter the picture, suddenly they seem to get unlimited access to water, putting existing business under enormous strain. Who pays if existing bores run dry, or have to drill further down?

Dust contamination will also be a huge problem for all areas south, southeast, southwest and northeast of the mine site. We are known as an extremely windy area. There is no way the mine people can give a 100% guarantee that NO dust will be blown away in the prevailing winds. The very fine dust particles carrying contaminants can be carried long distances, affecting the people, animals, pastures, wildlife and fishstock. Contamination of pastures will have a serious effect on livestock and native animals grazing the land, with a buildup over time. Contamination of other agricultural products such as wool will also be affected, with significant effects on export markets.

I am seriously worried about the short and long term health effects on people living and working within areas surrounding the mine. Lindenow has a primary school and a kindergarten. What will these young children be exposed to through the air they breathe and the water they drink? What about all the people living and working near and downwind from the mine? The vegetable pickers who spend all day working outside? I am sure that there will be significant increases in lung problems and cancer in the affected population. How can you be sure this will not occur?

This area struggles to attract and keep doctors working in Bairnsdale and surrounding areas. How will the health system cope with increases in major health problems?

East Gippsland is a major tourist destination for people wanting to enjoy our beautiful Lakes and rivers, mountains, bushland and abundance of native animals. Any contamination of waterways will put at risk this multimillion dollar, for people will not want to holiday where the waters are not safe. Flora and fauna will be vulnerable, not only around the main mine site, but further afield as they are affected by contaminated water and dust. There are many cases around Australia where old mine sites have never been properly rehabilitated. There is a high risk that the same thing would happen at this mine site, with the local people being left a toxic waste dump that is both an eyesore and dangerous.

There was never any proper public consultation; the mining company would send along people, the vast majority of whom had never set foot near the mine site, to address local meetings and answer questions. Most of these company people had no local knowledge and could not answer many, if any, questions that local people had. Concerns raised by locals were never addressed at the next meeting, so levels of frustration grew over time. No one made the mining company fully inform the public or properly address all their concerns.

I would like to know why the actual mine site does not contain the room for all the infrastructure required by the mine, namely bore requirements, bore pumps, pipelines, road widening works, easements, upgrade of powerlines, etc.



**Apparently the mining company are now being allowed to acquire land by compulsion, and forcing landholders to allow them access through their private properties. This is totally unacceptable, and these issues have been clothed in secrecy throughout all the "consultation" phases.**

This part of East Gippsland is unique, with a clean, green image for its abundance of food and other products grown here. Clean, uncontaminated water is essential for the existing multimillion dollar agricultural industries that are currently operating here. Why put at risk all these industries to allow a foreign mining company (who will be selling the mining rights as soon as approval is obtained) to come in and contaminate the water and environment for a short term profit that is taken off overseas? The water earmarked for this short term mining venture would have much more lucrative long term effects if directed into some forms of agriculture, especially the vegetable industry. About three times the number of jobs would be created compared to long term jobs in the mine, and the disastrous effects on water quality, water quantity, and dust contamination would not occur. Wealth created by these jobs would be kept here in Australia, not sent overseas.

**I believe that this Panel has a duty of care to all local people to NOT expose them to any short or long term public health risks that would be caused by this mine, particularly lung disease and cancer.**

**You also have a duty of care to existing farming businesses, their produce and their animals, local residents near the mine, and the environment (animals, plants and the land) to NOT allow any degradation and contamination.**

**You also have a duty of care to the hundreds of thousands of people who consume food produced in the local area that they will NOT be consuming contaminated food.**

Thank you once again for allowing me to make this submission.

Yours sincerely,

David Hallett.