

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

850

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Sally Court

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1:

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

My name is Sally Court and I am very concerned about the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project in Gippsland as proposed by Kalbar .

Coming from a family of nature loving people that included my father, Ron Court as a member of Field Naturalists, and the whole family being avid followers of the incredible experience and knowledge of Sir David Attenborough, I was lucky enough to find myself able to put this perspective into practice during my twelve years working with the Department of Defence. To verify my awareness and related experience, although not via tertiary qualifications, I offer the following brief outline of my exposure to similar issues arising from the proposed mine.

My work began with the Department of Defence as an APS 5 in 2000 with JALO, Joint Ammunition Logistics Organisation ,that incorporated the handing over of 17 explosive ordnance sites throughout Australia from the control of the individual military services, Army, Air Force and Navy, to a private contractor ADI, Australian Defence Industries.

A major part of that job was ensuring that each site was environmentally compliant in each state and that local, state and federal laws were adhered to and any issues fully rectified before handover to the commercial contractor. My work also included ensuring security and OH&S compliance.

The environmental compliance aspects included protection of native species, such as Northern Quolls, Orange Bellied Parrots, Chocolate Bats, magpies, macropod, possums and many others. It also included erosion control, contamination control and rectification, asbestos removal, decommissioning of underground fuel storage tanks, pest species management, protection of RAMSAR wetlands and marine environments.

The last six years were spent at the RAAF Base at East Sale and again as a contract manager ensuring contractor compliance to all aspects of building maintenance, new projects and demolitions as well as all Garrison Support Services, part of my duties included being the point of contact for all environmental issues arising from the business of running an Air Force Base liaising with the Senior Environmental Advisor for Victoria and Tasmania on behalf of contract management team. This included work to monitor and prevent contamination from the site into the water table and into the World Renowned RAMSAR wetlands that we are fortunate to have here in Wellington. Protection of old forest red gums and offset planting requirements were included amongst many other aspects of land and species protection and sustainable management.

My concerns over the proposed Fingerboards mineral sands mine project is consequently quite real. I have lived in this area now since 2006 having lived at the coastal areas of Loch Sport, Seaspray and the Honeysuckles, whilst working at the RAAF ESL and now live in Sale (10 years).

I won't go into the specific aspects of all the various details of the proposed works as I know other people have very accurately addressed these in their submissions. So I speak from the perspective of this 12 year experience.

These are my concerns:

- that the depth of the mine will interfere with the water table for the area. The sheer volume of water involved with the process must affect the capacity of the aquifer for domestic, commercial and agricultural water supply in the future.
- that the loss of so many trees will not be adequately offset and that the protection of the offset plantings will not be managed well enough to bring those plants to adulthood. I would like to see proof through examples of all mining projects previously shown to have been successfully rehabilitated after the project was completed.
- that dust from the site will not only affect all the surrounding farms and settlements, but that the natural bushland will be contaminated for all the native creatures including vital insects and will further extend the damage far outside of the perimeter of the mine area itself. We have important vegetable farms in very close proximity and that provide essential food and labour opportunities. These, according to the farmers will most certainly be compromised by dust from the mine.
- that being only 500 metres from the Mitchell River will almost certainly, despite proposed mitigations, affect the health of the river and that the native fish, animals and birds that live in and along it will be affected by the dust and the in ground vibrations.
- that the beautiful ever changing RAMSAR Wetlands and the whole Gippsland Lakes system will be forever altered by the influx of contaminated waters as well as the use of large quantities of water that had previously been flowing into that area. The altered PH levels are likely to affect the balance of water dwelling species in the lakes which in turn affects all wild life that form part of that large and intricate ecosystem.
- *underground vibrations are of great concern and would also affect many species normally living in quiet harmony with the seasons and weather conditions both in the ground and above ground. This includes insects which are vital to our biodiversity for recycling matter, pollination, being part of the food chain, enriching soil and many other unseen benefits to the whole success of an ecosystem. Just because they are small does not mean they have a small part to play in the health of our land.*
- and finally, what will happen to all the species that have been living there? All the mammals like echidnas, wombats, possums, bats, rodents? The snakes, goannas and lizards? As the wombat holes are dug up, how are the animals to be managed, euthanized? The wombats are now protected species and are endemic to this area.

I sincerely hope that the words of the people that live and work and retire here are given exposure and although it seems that we cannot have much impact on such a large endeavour, I really appreciate the opportunity to bring my concerns to the table.

Thank you for reading this. I love this area and this world and the more we dig into it and take away from it, the more damage we do to such an essential aspect of

survival for all species. In the words of Sir David Attenborough, we need to increase the wild spaces, not reduce them.

With respect

Sally Court
24/10/2020
Sale Victoria

