

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 856

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**Request to be heard?:** Yes

**Full Name:** Robert Hindle

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:**

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** See attached submission

19 October 2020

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

### **Re Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project**

I am writing this submission about the EES for the above project because I am most concerned about the potentially disastrous impact it may have on the vegetable growing region of Lindenow and Hillside, including the harmful effect on the quality and safety of the food we eat.

We have lived at Eastwood, a suburb of Bairnsdale, for 5 years and have particularly developed an appreciation of the health-giving quality of the produce of the area through our association with groups of seasonal workers from Vanuatu who have been working on an organic farm at Hillside.

Our major concern is the impact of the project on water availability and purity. Within the past 18 months the amount of water flowing down the Mitchell River has at times been so diminished that the flow has been insufficient to allow normal irrigation for many farms, restricting their capacity to plant crops. If the project operators require 3GL of water per annum for processing and dust control, this will create an immense impact on bores, aquifers and the Mitchell River.

The project includes a 90 hectare tailings dam containing chemicals which are shown on safety data sheets as being harmful to aquatic life. The EES provides insufficient details of the dam's construction, but there is a stated risk of leaching from such dams. Also, in the event of a 1 in a 100 year flood (quite a possibility in this era of climate change) tailings waste and chemicals could be released into creeks and rivers, harming aquatic life and aquifers. Regrettably, mine sites have a sad history of dam failings. We consider the contamination risk for both agricultural production and the domestic and commercial water storage at Woodglen Reservoir is unacceptably high.

Kalbar Operations Pty. Ltd. has acknowledged that the rare earths to be mined include radioactive substances. When excavated and crushed dust is generated and dispersed into the environment. Vegetable growing farms in the Lindenow Valley commence only 500 metres downwind from the mine site. We believe this creates an unacceptable risk of contaminated food crops harmful to human and animal health. The risks for animals include both grazing stock on nearby farms and domestic pets. Furthermore, if the vegetable industry had to be closed down, farmers would suffer catastrophic financial losses and there would be major losses of jobs.

In mining 13 square kilometres of land, at least 700 large mature trees will be removed, threatening the habitat of numerous fauna and flora. EES technical studies have been inadequate to know the extent of the threat of irreplaceable loss.

It is unacceptable that private land be compulsorily acquired for infrastructure located outside the mining project boundary: water pipelines, bore pumps, bore field, roadworks,

powerlines, easements and a rail siding. Why wasn't this part of the mine project area?  
Why is this not a matter for East Gippsland Shire Council to determine?

We have heard that the ownership of Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd has recently changed, and that the Company is now, or may soon become, primarily overseas owned. This causes us further disquiet as corporate history has demonstrated that overseas owners are solely concerned with financial returns and have little interest in environmental or societal impacts on neighbouring communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. We trust you will appreciate the major concerns of many members of our community about this proposed project.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Bob Hindle