

# Controversial mineral sands mine at Glenaladale rejected in East Gippsland Shire Council vote

ABC Gippsland / By Jarrod Whittaker

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East Gippsland Shire Council has voted unanimously to oppose a mineral sands mine planned for Glenaladale near Bairnsdale. *(Supplied: Mine Free Glenaladale)*

The East Gippsland Shire Council has voted to oppose a controversial mineral sands mine at Glenaladale, 260 kilometres east of Melbourne.

Kalbar Operations wants to build a 1,675-hectare mine to extract mineral products such as zircon and rare earths used in the production of equipment in communications, transport, medical technology and renewable energy.

The proposed mine site in the Lindenow Valley, about 20 kilometres north-west of Bairnsdale, is home to a range of vegetable producers who fear dust from the mine would negatively affect their businesses.

Last night's ordinary council meeting was meant to consider a recommendation to approve a

## Key points:

- A newly elected East Gippsland Shire Council votes to oppose a mineral sands mine
- An group opposed to the mine says Kalbar Operations does not have a social licence to develop the mine
- A six-week environmental hearing is set down to begin in March

submission to the project's Environmental Effects Statement (EES) process prepared for council by consultants.

But the newly formed council voted to go much further, accepting an alternate motion from Councillor Jane Greacen to oppose the project.

Cr Greacen's motion called for council to adopt the EES submission, but to produce an addendum to the submission about the project's impact on human health and climate change, which were not included in the consultant's report.

"[Kalbar's] EES acknowledges many risks then attempts to prove that they're able to be mitigated," she said.

"Unfortunately, there have been many expert scientific reviews of the technical evidence of this EES that have identified gaps and inaccuracies and questioned some of the data and the models used.

"The council's report shows that the EES has not demonstrated the potentially significant environmental and other impacts of the project can be acceptably managed, and therefore council has no choice but to oppose the project in our submission to the State Government."



table growers in the Lindenow Valley are opposed to a mineral sands mine being loped nearby. (*ABC Gippsland: Emma Field*)

## **Unanimous vote 'significant, strong position'**

The East Gippsland Shire Council had a major overhaul at the recent election and voted unanimously on the mine issue at its first ordinary meeting last night.

Mayor Mendy Urie said the vote was "a very big deal" for the new council.

"The council concluded that there were so many uncertainties and risks, which

were not addressed by the EES report, that it could not support this proposal," she said.

"I think it's really significant that council has taken this position to make a stand, supporting its community and I think it's part of council's role to protect its community."

"Whether it makes a difference, or not, I certainly hope it does and is taken into account," Mayor Urie said.

The group set up to lobby against the mine proposal, Mine Free Glenaladale, said the council vote sent a strong message to the Victorian Government about the council's and community's opposition to the mine.

"And it strongly signals that there's no social licence for the mine to proceed and that's extremely important because mines not only have to have an operating licence they need to have support from the community and that support from the community is not there," Mine Free Glenaladale spokeswoman Debbie Carruthers said.



Debbie Carruthers of Mine Free Glenaladale says the council vote sends a strong message to the Victorian Government. (ABC Gippsland: Rio Davis)

## Economic boost from mine

Kalbar Operations argued the project would deliver economic benefits to the region, creating about 200 construction jobs and a further 200 direct jobs during its 15 to 20-year lifespan.

The company said the project would inject \$15 million to \$20 million into the local economy each year from wages and \$10 million a year to the Victorian Government from royalties and taxes.

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Kalbar Operations chief executive Jozsef Patarica told last night's council meeting a lot of work had gone into producing the EES.

"The process has been thorough and substantial, as it should be, and preparing the EES has provided us with an opportunity to understand the environmental and social setting of the project as well as addressing and resolving the project's challenges," Mr Patarica said.

Victorian Planning Minister Richard Wynne has appointed an Inquiry and Advisory Committee to consider and advise on the project's EES, Works Approval application, and draft Planning Scheme Amendment for the East Gippsland Planning Scheme.

The committee will hold four to six weeks of public hearings starting in March before delivering a final report to the Minister.

A directions hearing is set down for December 14.