

Gippsland's Foodbowl Safe As Farmers Win Certainty

22 July 2019

Prime agricultural land in Gippsland will be permanently safeguarded, with the Andrews Labor Government exempting almost 4000 hectares from mining and minerals exploration.

Minister for Resources Jaclyn Symes today announced protection for the Mitchell River floodplain near Glenaladale - a prime irrigated horticultural area producing a wide variety of fresh vegetables including lettuce, cabbage, peas, capsicum and sweet corn.

The exempted area - stretching from Glenaladale to Hillside - is highly valued for its produce, with farm gate production estimated at over \$100 million per year, providing up to 2000 permanent and seasonal jobs.

Geological studies show low potential for minerals development in the floodplain area, which makes mining in the area less likely to be commercially viable compared to the highly-productive horticulture businesses in that area.

The decision to exempt this area from minerals exploration and mining licencing provides certainty to the highly productive Mitchell River floodplain horticultural businesses and the many people working in the industry across Gippsland.

The proposed Kalbar Fingerboards mineral sands project is currently under consideration via an Environment Effects Statement.

Regulatory decisions on exploration licence applications in the broadacre grazing areas away from the floodplain are on hold while the EES and public exhibition process assess the compatibility of sand mining in this landscape.

Two grants of up to \$40,000 each are available to support not-for-profit community organisations in the Glenaladale area to engage legal services assisting the preparation of a submission to the EES process.

Not-for-profit community organisations that are interested in taking part need to apply through earthresources.vic.gov.au/advisor-grants - applications close 5pm on Monday 22 July 2019.

More information about the assessment of the Fingerboards mineral sands project is available at planning.vic.gov.au. The project proponent, Kalbar Resources, supports the exemption for the floodplain.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Resources and Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

“It makes sense to provide certainty for horticulture businesses and workers in areas of exceptional agricultural value where there is unlikely to be a commercial mineral resource.”

“This area produces world-class food - we need to secure the employment opportunities it creates well into the future.”

“Through the Mineral Resources Strategy we are supporting the development of an industry that can coexist with other regional industries and create additional jobs for local communities.”