

PRESENTATION NOTES transcribed from handwritten document

Ms Sharon Clerke

Tues 13 July 2021

IAC Fingerboards Mine

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I would like to acknowledge the Gunaikunai people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging.

My presentation here today is made up of scrawled notes, written over weeks and months, during this process. Some written in the early hours of this morning.

Stick It notes to remind me of things I wish to say here today and memories of my years spent living in Glenaladale.

'No Spell Check'

'No Auto Dot Points'

And No Glossy white paper with neatly typed words.

This is my Presentation.

I would like to request from Kalbar any communications to myself from Kalbar or Kalbar's employees in regards to consultation regarding my close proximity to the proposed mine site.

My name is Sharon Clerke and I live at Glenaladale, 2.4 km from the proposed mine boundary. I am what is called a tree changer before it was fashionable.

Almost 30 years ago I moved to East Gippsland with my partner, from the suburbs of Melbourne.

We purchased a business and rented in the area while we searched for our Forever Property, an older home that needed love, on small acreage, was our dream. After 3 years of searching and our business growing, we found that Forever Home. A now, hundred year old weatherboard on 7 acres at Glenaladale. Three years later we purchased another 6 acres on the boundary of our property.

Whilst the slow process of restoring our home began, originally moved from Brighton, Melbourne, we also purchased 3 rental properties, one to later be demolished to make way for a purpose built retail store of which we still own, and run our business.

The previous owners of our home had originally moved an old weather board church to our property, however, due to not being secured to the concrete stumps, it blew down overnight and another house had to be found. Rather ironic when the proponent seems confident dust won't be a problem. No wind here. They haven't lived at Glenaladale for nearly 30 years.

The beauty of Glenaladale and surrounds is breath taking. Why wouldn't you want to live here?

The local community welcomed us with open arms, country hospitality at its best.

I will always remember getting invited to the community Christmas Party, held by a different landowner each year. This was only 6 months after we had moved to Glenaladale, and still very much city people and a little nerve racking.

We arrived at the property at the said time to be met by an older gentleman dressed in his black suit, tie and white shirt, directing us to our parking spot. After exiting our vehicle, juggling our BYO drinks and the requested place, or in our case a casserole, we were greeted by the property owner/car park attendant.

I cannot express the thrill of realising we were home and this was my dream. These people made you feel special. Not outsiders, not city slickers.

The property owner's wife showed me, with pride, how she had laid the most beautiful parquet floor throughout their home, while her wood burner stove took pride of place in her kitchen.

Sadly, this wonderful couple are no longer with us, which is probably a blessing, as their property, like others, will be decimated if Kalbar get their way.

Unless you have experienced country hospitality at its best, you have no idea what it is like to live in Glenaladale.

Country people don't believe you are local until you have lived in the area for at least 20 years. Something we were told when we first moved to East Gippsland, many times. So I guess you can now call me a local.

Unlike Kalbar, that seem to be a little confused as to what the word 'local' really means.

In our time living in East Gippsland, we have experienced Fires, Floods and Drought. Not one of you here today can even begin to imagine what a drought does to a farmer.

Or a flood, that washes all your hard work down the Mitchell River. Years of work, gone.

Or a fire that roars past you like a steam train.

I have seen it all, many times, in the time I have lived in Glenaladale.

We have never considered fire a risk when we first moved to Glenaladale.

Grass waist high as we put up electric fences on the property to keep our horses from foundering. Things were very different some 30 years ago.

In 2014 many things changed, as a small puff of smoke from a lightning strike on Mt Ray and watched by us at our back door, threatened the community.

It took just 3 weeks and hot north winds to change a small hamlet into a Disaster Zone.

The Mt Ray-Boundary Track Fire, as it was called, was started by lightning strike on the 16th January 2014, and burnt for some 67 days over 6,700 ha of public and private land. It blew up on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2014, destroying 3 homes, numerous sheds and out buildings, 900 livestock and 73 kms of fencing. Thankfully, no human lives were lost.

It was a Sunday, extremely hot and the strongest hot North wind I had ever experienced. We had placed our horse float near the house to load our horses and leave if the fire broke its containment lines. I stood behind the float, trying to escape the wind and watched a small puff of smoke grow larger. The horse float was swaying so much from the wind I thought it was going to topple over.

I went back inside to phone 'again' the Vic Emergency Hotline to check what the latest advice was.

"Too late to leave" and then wished me good luck.

By the time we had pulled our boots back on, a massive plume was over our house. It was too late to leave.

We lost power later that night and all around us was alight. Glowing orange through the smoke and darkness. Our closest neighbours all still safe. But no idea what was happening further afield. The Dargo Road blocked by burning trees in both directions. Trapped for 3 days before finally a CFA Captain from Mt Taylor drove up our driveway.

What he told us that day was heartbreaking. It took another 2 days before we were even able to drive to the Fingerboards, and another 24 hours before I could get to Bairnsdale. That drive was even more distressing, with bloated, smouldering stock still in paddocks, and nothing but blackness as far as the eye could see.

How could Kalbar have not seen this only weeks later?

What does happen to a community after something like the Mt Ray Fires is that it brings people together. Neighbour helping neighbour, burying stock, repairing fences, removing burnt trees, clearing paddocks and just having a cuppa together, and listening. Something Kalbar has never done.

That day is something I will never forget.

Then Kalbar came along.

The Kalbar Cowboys, as they were called, arrived 2 weeks later with no respect to the landholders, some that had lost everything, and others still shooting and burying their stock.

Many in the community were unaware of what was about to come.

By November 2014, it was obvious that the cowboys were dipping their toes in the water, and Mine Free Glenaladale was about to be formed.

They, Kalbar, appeared in their moleskins, RM Williams shirt and boots, and of course, the mandatory Akubra hat – it didn't sit well.

Not Country – Not Local.

For over 7 years and 4 CEO's and numerous employees, we have endured a circus.

Kalbar had, and have, NO SOCIAL LICENCE.

Life came back to Glenaladale after the Mt Ray fires and an endless drought.

Rare Orchids scattered through the paddocks. Platypus swimming in the Mitchell river, only a few hundred metres from Kalbar's proposed mine, and now a vulnerable species, the Giant Burrowing Frog, in our dams (and, yes, they are there) and numerous sightings of Spotted Quolls.

Something Kalbar seemed to have overlooked. Studies done in drought, desktop studies, all very different from what treasures Glenaladale holds close.

I have had the privilege of encountering not one, but a pair of Powerful Owls, something most locals of Glenaladale have never seen.

Late one night, while calling our Jack Russel inside for the night, I saw a dark shape on our pergola. My immediate thought was someone was crouched down on the pergola above me.

As my eyes adjusted, a massive bird stared back at me. Within seconds, I noticed a second one, as they took flight over the top of me. I can not describe the noise of their wings as they flew over my head. To this day, I am still in awe of what I witnessed that night. The wing span enormous.

Some years later driving home late one night I saw another lone Powerful Owl, not far from The Fingerboards.

Over the years, many locals have sighted Spotted Quolls, they too, frequent Glenaladale.

And the discovery of the Giant Burrowing Frog now requires protection from greed of a mining company. In the words of Dawn Stubbs;

“ There is a belief that humankind has domination over all living things on the planet, giving us the right to exploit all ecosystems for the benefit of a few at the expense of other life forms, including the most vulnerable of their own kind.”

When Kalbar came along, they picked on the old, the weak and the greedy.

However, the majority dug their heels in and stood proud, ready to fight.

I was one of them.

Rio Tinto had been before with honesty and openness.

Water and the Vegetable farms were their concerns. So they left!

For over 7 years, I have stood with the farmers, the tree changers and the amazing people that don't want this mine.

And it needs to stop here.

I, along with so many others, have been appalled by the whole process, from Go to Wo.

What gives anyone the right to rape and pillage, not only landholders, but the environment?

The EES stands for Environmental Effects Statement.

Some of you listening to my presentation today may have strayed from the Environment, too much at stake, what's in it for me, how much am I getting paid, it's my job.

I hope you don't have children or grandchildren, you don't deserve them if you believe this mine is a good idea.

We are all here for such a very short time. What right do we have to leave it worse than what we have enjoyed in our lifetimes?

The history of Glenaladale goes back generations. How different it must have been back then.

The old Glenaladale school sits just beyond our property.

Now only remnant foundations remain, but if you look very carefully, you can imagine how school life must have been so many years ago.

Shirley McKenna, my neighbour, went to school after moving to Glenaladale, with her family in 1932. She was 4 months old.

Back then, 500 dairy farms existed between Glenaladale and Maffra.

The Glenaladale School was a tiny weatherboard school house, set amidst the bush and always at risk during fire season. A tennis court at the school would often see upwards of 80 people playing and spectating, and sharing afternoon tea.

The Post Office was just down the road from our property. Now Mr Power resides. A tree changer and Artist, originally from Melbourne, like so many of us.

Electricity did not come to Glenaladale until 1965 and the Dargo Road not sealed till many years later.

The Glenaladale Cemetery sits on the Lindenow Flats now, surrounded by vegetable fields, and a proposed mine site only a short distance away.

Few headstones still remain, however from as early as 1850 until 1945, at least 27 graves lies there. Some as young as 2 days old to those that lived into their 90<sup>th</sup> year.

These people worked the land and made Glenaladale what it is today, and many of their families still live and work the land of Glenaladale to this day.

One wonders what they would think of the battle the landholders of Glenaladale have had to face the last 7 years.

Now security cameras watch the locals as they travel the roads of The Glen.

What is it that Kalbar fears from a farmer that breeds sheep, grows lettuce or a retiree that goes for that all important Sunday drive.

NOT LOCAL AND NOT WELCOME, KALBAR

How dare you bring this sort of madness to Glenaladale.

Why do Kalbar employees have these security cameras facing the road, the Fingerboards and the blue gums. (that was advised by Carolyn Blaint from Coffey a number of years ago)

Why do you need to watch the community? Are you that frightened of us, Mr Patarica?

At the East Gippsland Field Days this year, Mr Patarica informed a number of MFG supporters that he had had to go to the Police as someone had posted him an "anti-mine" bumper sticker.

Are you serious? What a waste of Police resources.

MFG still has stickers if you would like to purchase the full set.

This is not Senegal, West Africa; Grand Cote Mine. Which seems to be a prerequisite to be part of the team at Kalbar. 'Jozef's getting the band back together', is the word around town. At least 6 have joined the team, all working at the Grand Cote Mine, including Mr Patarica.

Key facts on the grand Cote Mineral Sands Mine

- Locals never consulted
- Landowners arrested for protecting their land – some jailed
- Insufficient compensation
- Seven hamlets displaced in 2017
- Water impacts on vegetable growers in the area
- Underground water previously at 5 metres deep, today requires wells of 12 metres
- Promises for jobs never eventuated

- A promised hospital was never built

Not a resume to be proud of and this is only one of many mines mentioned – many hold a sordid past.

Fosterville also paints a sad story. On your watch, Mr Patarica.

This is not Africa, Kalbar, even though we too are prepared to go to jail to protect what we hold dear, so be forewarned.

Twenty four names appear on Kalbar's requested 'overview of mining experience' to the IAC.

And yet, with 24 names listed and only 2 local's employed, local content is sorely missing.

Last Friday, Kalbar's office was closed, not unusual, when it is rarely open (closed for almost 12 months last year and some of this year)

Having to bang on Kalbar's door last Friday – only one young man was in attendance.

What of the other 23?

It always looks better on paper, doesn't it?

Some of you here today may never meet these people or recognise their faces, but everyday they play an extremely important part of your, your families, your neighbours, your friends and your work colleagues' lives. These people are what I call local. You see:

You drink milk from their dairies

You eat vegetables from their fields

You dine on steaks from their paddocks

You wear wool from their sheep

You drive through McDonalds for your lettuce in your burger

You enjoy asparagus with your steaks

You put butter on your corn

You like your broccoli cooked just right

You like to purchase organic vegetables

And your Dim Sims are tasteless without cabbage.

Every day, these farmers and their families play a pivotal role in your lives and millions of Australians and overseas customers.

Don't tell me, Mr Morris, that a mine and the Lindenow Valley farmers can work together. Not that I've seen you at the McDonalds Drive Thru.

How did we end up here, today, justifying a food bowl and the dairy, beef and sheep farmers.

And how did we end up here, with the environment being put at incredible risk by a company that has never mined a grain of sand.

The process clearly needs to change.

These farmers don't ask for thanks, they have just gone about their business, doing what they do best, some have done this for generations.

Milk does not come from a carton and steak from a foam tray. And Kalbar don't belong at Glenaladale.

What about the environment?

Who is speaking for it, obviously not the proponent that seems to believe it will do no harm.

The United Nations state, and I quote

“the human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a pre-requisite for the realisation of other human rights”

Kalbar needs to take note of that.

Less than 3% of the water covering the Earth is fresh water.

Let me say that again.

Less than 3% of the water covering the Earth is fresh water.

And yet Kalbar want how many Gigalitres? This week.

Kalbar want to put a mine 350 metres from the Mitchell River (a Heritage Listed River flowing in to the Gippsland Lakes, a Ramsar listed wetlands)

And Kalbar's "expert" witness, Tony McAlister, drops the Clanger.

“Dilution being the solution to pollution”

Sound familiar? ERR seems to have turned a blind eye to the Benambra mine, now known as Lake Barbara, a tailings dam, leaking toxic tailings in to Straight Creek, flowing in to the Tambo River.

86,000 litres a day is the estimate.

Is Dilution still the Solution?

Do a survey of how many people living on the Tambo River have, or have had, some form of cancer.

The Mitchell River doesn't want these sort of percentages.

Dilution is not the Solution, Mr McAlister.

Just ask those living on the Tambo River.

DELWP's recommendations advise us to only eat up to a fish per week from the Gippsland Lakes and Rivers. I believe children and pregnant women is less or even nil.

Since I started this journey I have discovered how studies are distorted, scales down and not made public, and how government just doesn't want you to know.

Dolphins dies in our Lakes. (The Burranan Dolphin, only found in the Gippsland Lakes and Port Phillip Bay)

PFA's levels are increasing in our rivers and lakes.

Blue Green Algae a constant curse to our waterways.

AND KALBAR WANTS TO BUILD A WHAT? ARE YOU SERIOUS?

Many years ago John Farnham released 'Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head'. It was 1969.

I was 7 years of age and I remember vividly my first holiday to Lakes Entrance. There were many more before a permanent move to East Gippsland.

There are 3 things I remember from that holiday.

- 1 The small cabin that we stayed in had a TV that you had to insert 20 cent pieces in to view for an allocated time
- 2 We went to The Central Hotel for dinner, and an older man played a piano while we dined. He played 'Sadie, the Cleaning Lady', only if I say along. Which I did.
- 3 I caught my first ever fish and my last ever fish, by just walking across the main highway and throwing a line in attached to a cylindrical cork.

Something that would never happen today.

Many things have changed but my passion for the environment has grown over the years, thanks to my Father and the beauty of East Gippsland.

How dare you even consider this proposal.

The Lakes needs to be preserved for the generations to come, protection is now so very important.

David Attenborough would tell you it is almost too late, so the Panels Decision is possibly the most important decision you could possibly make.

Let your children and grandchildren enjoy what so many of us took for granted growing up.

During this hearing, a comment was made, a comment that Kalbar have constantly used in their sales pitch.

"Mineral Sands Mines have an excellent track record of rehabilitation. Many of the famous east coast beaches have been mined, for instance, but you can't tell now".

It couldn't be further from the truth, and extremely misleading.

And I will tell you why.

Many years ago, in my final year of High School, a very proactive geology teacher taught her students about mineral sands mining on Fraser Island, Queensland. I was one of them.

Some years later, I purchased a 4 wheel drive, and with a former student and friend, we drove the long trip to Fraser Island. I was 21 years old. (1983)

I would like to read a quote from Mr John Sinclair, AO

"An inspection of the mined areas in December 2016, exactly 40 years since the end of mining, confirmed the view of ecologists to various inquiries that it would *"take 500 years if ever"* to re-establish the original plant communities that once existed there. The whole mining process completely destroyed the soil profile. In DM Minerals case it reduced what was an advanced Dune System 2 back to a very young Dune System 1. It takes hundreds if not thousands of years for the soil profile to develop and it seems that no amount of trying to assist Nature is going to hasten that process. Add to that the issue of weeds, particularly lantana, that have thrived in the disturbed conditions. Mining has turned out to be the environmental disaster that was predicted in 1971"



In 1983, the Byron Bay locals became aware of the high radioactive soil. Today high Geiger counter readings are the legacy of Mineral Sands mining at Byron, many unaware of the risks even today.

2009 Rainbow Beach – moves by the State Government to remove a huge sand dune, still radioactive after 40 odd years in one area, 30 – 40 times higher than normal background radiation, thanks to Mineral Sands Mining.

2011 North Shore, Noosa. Tonnes of potentially radioactive mineral sands is being dug out of the scrub, believed to be remediation of an old mining site

2013 Rainbow Beach again, the government looks at a clean up operation.

2018 Byron Bay again, possible radioactive dust pollution during excavation at a shopping mall site – a former mineral sands mine site

2021 Stradbroke Island. Closure of North Stradbroke Islands Adams Beach temporarily closed due to radioactive soil – the legacy of mineral sands mining

2021 Rainbow beach. Today, the area associated with mineral sands mining still remains fenced and radioactive.

These are the legacies of mineral sands mining.

500 hectares were mined at Fraser Island and I saw no rehabilitation

So, you see, there is no excellent track record of rehabilitation of the famous east coast beaches, only a legacy of misery.

What will become of Glenaladale, the Mitchell River, the Gippsland Lakes?

Our legacy, both yours and mine, will be judged in future years.

My father would be very proud of the stand I have taken through the years.

I hope your children will feel the same.

Fact

The Gippsland Lakes and its network of coastal lagoons and marsh environments are the largest estuarine lagoon system in Australia.

The Perry River Chain of Ponds are one of the most intact systems in Victoria and extremely rare. They are unique as they contain sections of intact ponds as well as ponds recovering from erosion, and are home to many threatened plant and animal species.

The Mitchell River Silt Jetties are the longest Silt Jetties in the world, formed over thousands of years.

The Mitchell River National park, in some of its gorges, remnants are found of warm-temperate rainforest, the southern most occurrence of this type of forest in the world. Reported sightings of more than 150 bird species and 25 mammal species in the park. And of course a very important location for the Gunaikurnai people.

Why would you put something so very rare at even the slightest risk?

What legacy will we leave East Gippsland?

On the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of June this year, East Gippsland including Glenaladale experienced what was classed as a minor flood event. Glenaladale's rainfall amounts ranged from 60 – 80 mm. Mt Moornapa 113 mm.

These photos show the results of what occurs during a minor flood event

It is obvious that even a minor flood event at Glenaladale can

- 1 Destroy bridges
- 2 Make gullies in the mine footprint become rivers
- 3 Close the Princes Highway from Stratford to Bairnsdale
- 4 Flood the very intersection Kalbar want to exit from. The Lindenow south road on to the Princes Highway to Bairnsdale.
- 5 And make the ground turn to quicksand.

This was not a flood event. This is a flood (2003/2006/2012)

I would like to ask some questions of the IAC

- 1 To supply the total number of residents, not residences, that reside within a 5 km radius of the mine footprint
- 2 To supply the total number of both residents and residences that will be affected with 80 B doubles a day pass their homes on the round trip to Bairnsdale and return. Perhaps Mr Fenning can confirm the route for the IAC
- 3 I would like the IAC to investigate the sale of land owned by Mr John Dahlsen, it being the location of Kalbar's nursery. Has or will Kalbar purchase this property or will the nursery have to be relocated and to where?
- 4 I would also like the IAC to take note of the comments that have become a constant around Bairnsdale, spread through the grapevine of Kalbar  
Comments such as;
  - It's a done deal
  - Were just going through the motions, it's all go
  - It's already been ticked off
  - the government wants this mine and has already okayed it
  - contracts have already been signed
  - it's all a goer and that's come down from the hierarchy

These sorts of comments give people little faith in the process and it has been quite distressing for some. I don't expect an apology from Kalbar or the IAC, however, I would hate to think there was any truth to these comments, making a complete mockery of this whole process.

I guess we will have to just wait and see.

I find it incomprehensible that I need to sit here today and justify why the mine should not be approved.

Why should I have to explain to others why I wish to live at Glenaladale?

Why should I have to request complete strangers visit my property?

Why does the general public have to convince a government this mine is in the most inappropriate landscape? And raise the money themselves to fight it? A \$40,000 grant was gone in a blink.

Why do Exploration Licences sit over such fragile eco systems?

And why are farmers treated as second class citizens when a company like Kalbar comes to town?

1,000's support a Mine free Glenaladale.

Only a handful of submitters speak in favour of a mine.

Are Investors such as Appian given the full picture or are they just pawns in Kalbar's game?

If you are a supporter of this mine proposal, ask yourself, have you heard the farmer's side? Have you even bothered to sit down with them to understand their concerns?

No, probably not and you certainly don't give a damn about the environment either.

Kalbar's Mr Morris has commented on the figure of 50 Million dollars so far spent by Kalbar on this project, yet no documents substantiate this figure.

What of the cost to the landholders of Glenaladale surrounds and their supporters over the last 7 years?

Both mentally and monetarily.

Mr Morris, you took the Hospital Pass. What amount of money convinced you to take on the destruction of the environment and the very vegetables that both you and your family consume?

The government has a duty of care not to cause harm.

I hope Mr Wynne is listening to the thousands that want a Mine Free Glenaladale.

So, let's just for a few minutes talk about Mine Free Glenaladale (MFG for short)

Over 7 years ago, concerned about Exploration Licences appearing in the local paper, a small few sat around a kitchen table, myself included.

Back then, few would listen to MFG

Comments such as ;

Let's just wait

I don't like your chances

Not enough information ... well, nothings changed there!

And a small few wanted to know what was in it for them.

I could name them, but I won't, they know who they are.

Greed can be all consuming, but it will never bring you happiness.

Those that sit around the table of MFG are proud people, determined, resilient fighters, my friends, and not all reside at Glenaladale, as some would believe.

They have fought for over 7 years and will continue to fight. MFG is now not a small group of people that sit around a kitchen table.

They are the thousands that support the landholders of Glenaladale, the farmers, the environment and the Gunaikunai people.

I would like to thank each and every one of them. They are my friends and they are the most remarkable people I have ever had the privilege of knowing.

Those who listen to my presentation today may never know what it is like to have the support of so many.

Sometimes I think that perhaps those that attack MFG are jealous of what we have achieved, and the friendships that exist between us all.

We did not choose to become activists nor did we choose to become part of a process that is so very flawed.

But here we are, and we are not going to back down.

MFG will keep fighting.

If that means protesting.

If that means blockading.

If that means Class Actions.

If that means taking this to the Highest Court.

Be warned, Kalbar and the Government.

After 7 years, we have nothing to lose.

WE WILL STOP KALBAR

And any other company that dares to think they can mine Glenaladale.

Be forewarned we have no intention of backing down and people power will win, even if it were to take another 7 years.

Something that I have learned on this journey is that people want to have purpose.

Do you, sitting on the IAC Panel, have purpose or is it just a process?

Think very carefully before you make your decision.

Your children and your children's children will have to live with the consequences of your decision.

Thank you for listening to me today, and thank you to all those that have supplied me with photos and support for this presentation.

And Thank You all that support a Mine Free Glenaladale.