

Controversial mineral sands mine rejected because of environmental risks

Residents and farmers are celebrating after a plan to mine mineral sands in Gippsland was rejected because of environmental risk.



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Kalbar's proposed mineral sands mine prompted community outrage. Source: Mine-Free Glenaladale

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A plan for a controversial open-cut mineral sands mine in the East Gippsland food bowl has been rejected because of "unacceptable" environmental risks.

Planning Minister Richard Wynne turned down the 20-year proposal from Kalbar Operations to mine and process about 170 million tonnes of ore enriched in zircon, titanium minerals and rare-earth minerals from the site 20km northwest of Bairnsdale.

Mr Wynne acknowledged an independent review panel's recommendation that the Kalbar project, if approved, would significantly impact wildlife, vegetation, air quality, agriculture and horticulture.



Kalbar wanted to mine at the Fingerboards site at Glenaladale, East Gippsland.



A community campaign protested against the mine proposal. Source: Mine-Free Glenaladale

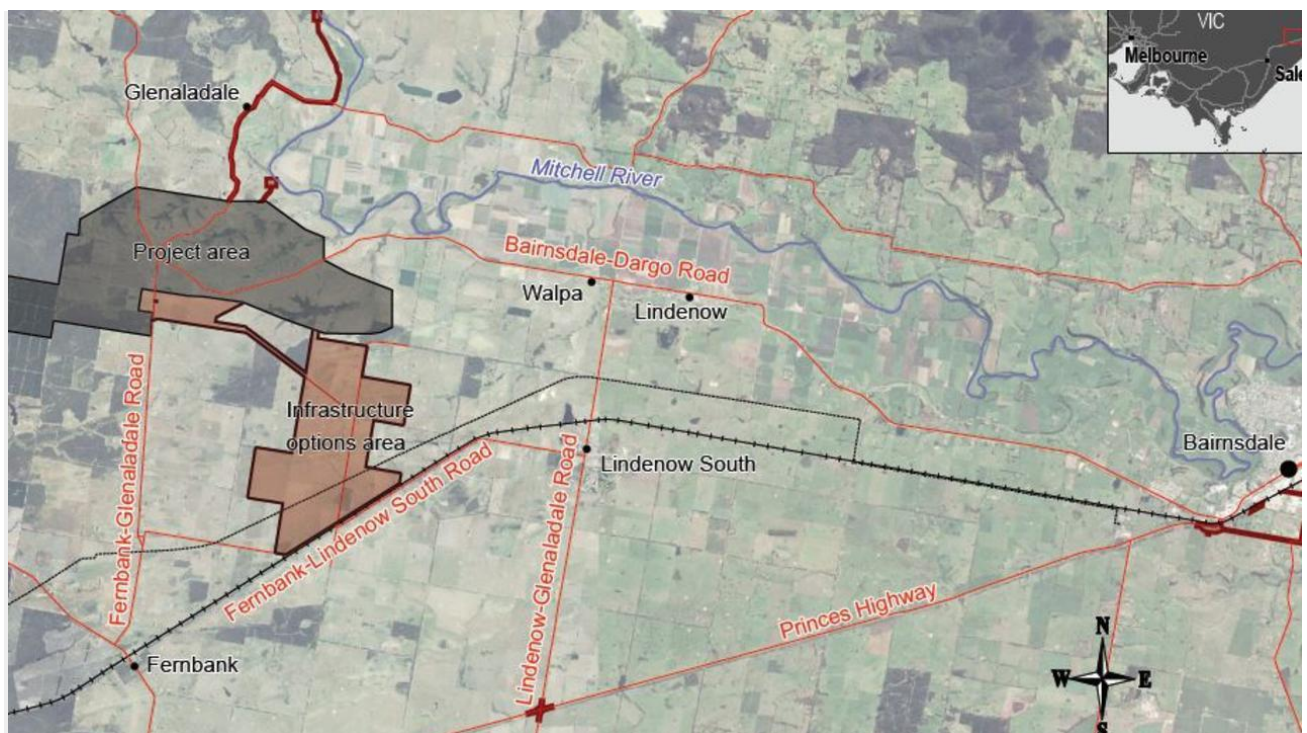
The assessment also found that the mine would have posed risks to surface water downstream.

The proposed location of the \$200 million mine – known as Fingerboards – was on 13sq km of fertile farming land near the Mitchell River.

“We owe it to the community and the environment to get this right and ensure only projects that adequately protect our environment go ahead,” Mr Wynne said.

“I have accepted the committee’s recommendation not to proceed with planning permissions for this project. The committee’s review of the environment effects statement found this project would pose a significant risk to the environment and valuable horticulture industry.”

The minister’s decision will be a relief for the community campaign, backed by farmers and residents, which fought a long battle against the proposed mine.



Map showing Kalbar’s proposed mineral sands mine at Glenaladale, East Gippsland. Source: Kalbar/EES

East Gippsland Shire Council also came out in opposition to the mine earlier this year.

Kalbar had forecast that the mine would create about 200 jobs at the site, plus another 200 in associated services and industries.

The mine plans also prompted a [proposed class action from people](#) who live near the site who say they suffered financial, physical and mental distress while the proposal was being considered.



It was claimed the habitat of the giant burrowing frog would be endangered. Pic: Alexander Dudley

This year's independent inquiry and advisory committee which reviewed the environment effects statement and received almost 1000 submissions, also heard that the project could [threaten the habitat of the rare giant burrowing frog](#) which is listed as vulnerable.

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