

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

16

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Jonathan Smith

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1:

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Jonathan Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 29 September 2020 4:22 PM
To: Richard Wynne (PARL) [REDACTED]
Subject: Kalbar sand mine

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express my concerns that the proposed Fingerboards sand mine near Bairnsdale poses an unacceptable risk to the environment, the local economy and public health and should not be allowed to proceed.

Water is essential to life, and it seems also to mining.

Life must take precedence.

Fresh water is the life blood of the Gippsland Lakes and all its inhabitants.

The Gippsland Lakes is a highly eutrophic estuary that is already impacted by reduced water flows from the Thompson River. During dry conditions toxic cyanobacterial blooms are common in Lake Wellington and Lake Victoria, extending into Lake King and Bancroft Bay when salinity levels fall.

These blooms restrict/deny water access to swimmers, fishers, boaters, birdwatchers, canoeists etc. and cause real economic loss to local business which is felt not only directly at the time but also in reputational loss which impacts potential future earnings.

Eutrophic, turbid water also limits the available light required for seagrass. Seagrass beds are the nurseries and crucial habitat for most of the marine species within the lakes. They are relatively slow-growing and have been struggling to recover from successive events i.e. bushfires followed by flood and extensive algal blooms. We are in the midst of one of these events right now, with highly turbid nutrient rich water fuelling a succession of harmful algal blooms for the past 8 months, and continuing.

Bairnsdale has been building a reputation as a major 'clean, green' food supplier due to the sustainable vegetable industry on the Mitchell River flood plain at Lindenow. Horticulture requires clean, fresh water to survive. This industry provides ongoing employment and healthy food as well as complimenting the tourism, winery, cafe and restaurant businesses which have also grown over the past decade. These are fantastic local businesses which can provide real income year after year with little or no adverse impact on the environment, in fact by encouraging improved farming techniques there are opportunities to improve the health of the waterways and the general

environment, for the sustained benefit of all. Tourists come to experience a healthy, attractive, thriving environment and community.

A sand mine does not provide any of these positive experiences, benefits, or opportunities for environmental improvement, quite the opposite.


Dust is a major health concern, as well as an economic one for horticulture and grape-growing. It is completely implausible to believe that the mine operation and sand transportation can occur without creating an ever-present dust hazard which will at times be extreme. Prevailing winds will carry this dust along the river valley to Bairnsdale, covering food crops and wine grapes along the way which will then require washing before processing, further increasing water usage and handling costs. The dust may be toxic through the presence of radioactive particles, but dust particles alone are enough to cause adverse health impacts on humans. I believe dust monitoring will be largely ineffective due to the paucity of EPA personnel, vagaries of the weather, disinclination of the mine operators to halt production and the lag-time between raising a dust cloud and stopping the machinery.

In my opinion nothing can ameliorate the potential negative effects of this proposal on the health, well-being and economy of the Bairnsdale region.

For these reasons I urge you to reject the sand mine application.

Yours Sincerely

Jonathan Smith
Biologist


Metung
Victoria 3904
Australia