

SUBMISSION 628

Thank you for allowing me to speak on Mal Baker's behalf as Mal has injured the main tendon on the top of his foot and has to rest it most of the day.

Mal was employed in the Mining industry for 30 years of his working life 5 years of which was in the Mineral Sands Mining in W.A. mostly on undulating sand plain country 280 km. north of Perth with the nearest town Moora approximately 55 km. away with a roadhouse about 15 km. away, 25 km from the coast and no homes within 50 km. apart from one farmhouse 5-7 km. away and within 25 km. from the coast. This proposed mine will be within 3 km. of 81 homes!

Since 2007-2014 much of his mining experience was working on the Tailing Dams which were mostly high density polyethylene (plastic lined).

This proposed mine will be digging down 45 metres – of this 45 metres, how much is over burden and how much is ore body? Out of the ore body approximately only 4% is generally product, which has to be separated, and the balance goes into the Tailings dam generally becoming tailings waste.

At one of the public meetings held in Bairnsdale by Kalbar, the issue of non-availability of water was raised, the answer given was that operations would cease for that time. In Mal's experience in Mining, operations were never stopped due to a lack of water for dust suppression. All means available would be taken to minimise the dust but due to the huge daily ongoing costs, operations were never halted unless due to safety issues. These costs amounted to many tens of thousands of dollars per day.

In Mal's experience, this is definitely the wrong location for a mine of this kind and size considering there are 81 homes within a 3 kilometre radius where people live, farm and work as well as a school and all of the vegetable growers on the Lindenow Flats AND the fact that this mine is going to operate 24 hours per day 7 days per week. The number of homes in the vicinity of the mine have seriously been under-reported.

At another public meeting held in Lindenow by Kalbar, Mal raised the question of where the final processing would be carried out, as, from his experience, there would be a certain amount of low-level radio-active waste from this operation and it would need to be disposed of somewhere. The question was not answered!

Mal has visited the proposed mine site and, considering they will be digging up to 45 metres deep, considers the risk of dust from this operation to be very high. The close proximity to the Mitchell & the Perry Rivers, the local, well established vegetable growing industry and the Woodglen Reservoir where domestic and commercial water is stored for the whole region, this risk should NOT EVEN BE CONSIDERED. Mal has serious concerns with any contamination that could occur – how would any contamination be addressed considering the serious issues with contaminated water going into the Tambo River from the Benambra mine, even though many millions of tax payer's dollars were spent trying to rectify that problem which still exists.

On radio News on the 12th July this year (earlier this week) they were notifying everyone NOT to eat any mussels/shellfish from the Lakes at the moment due to contamination. And this follows an article in the local paper on the 2nd June, 2021 from the East Gippsland Catchment Authority that said that “the Victorian Government remains committed to improving the health of the Gippsland Lakes”!! If this is so, how could a mineral sands mine of this size and close location to our precious rivers which flow into the Gippsland Lakes even be considered by the Victorian Government?

According to local farmers in the area, if the 3-5 gigalitres of water, required by the mine to operate, were allocated to the horticultural industry, which has already proven its worth, three times more jobs could be created than what is proposed by the Mine. Also, in Mal's experience within the mining industry, due to the high labour costs and huge technological advances, more and more of the operations are being automated and consequently less jobs in the field. Why are we overlooking this massive opportunity to advance an already sustainable and operating industry which is ongoing, and pays Shire Rates, not one that only lasts for 10-20 years?

In Mal's last working years, he was heavily involved with building tailings dams and, from what he can understand of the proposed dam construction for THIS mine, there is a risk of contaminated leakage or worse, a wall failure, using wet or slurried tailings. In the case of a proposed centrifuge system being used to process the tailings, the tailings waste would be predominantly solidified & thus alleviating the dam issue. What happens if the Centrifuge system fails or does not work? Does the mine revert back to wet tailings? If this is the case and being so close to our precious Mitchell River which flows into the

Gippsland Lakes, this region cannot risk the Lakes system being damaged even more.

There is another issue relating to the water and extreme weather conditions. In relation to the mine footprint there are natural gullies that flow into the Mitchell River from within the mine footprint– how can these be controlled? With this, the contamination issue is raised again.

The mine in Benambra, which has been allowed to re-open even though the tailings dam was leaking and many millions of tax payers dollars had already been spent on it. This tailings dam is still leaking 86,000 litres of contaminated water daily into the Tambo River which then flows into the Gippsland Lakes. The results have been disastrous as there are now very few fish to be caught so tourists are now going further north to go fishing! Locals have also been advised not to eat any fish out of the Tambo or the Lakes at the moment due to the high levels of Mercury! Do we need to damage these precious waterways with another BAD decision!

For a region that is so dependent on the Agriculture and Tourism Industries who both need good quality water, this mine is definitely in the wrong location. There are many other sites for mineral sands mining which would not have such a serious impact as this one would, on one of the most precious environmental areas in Australia. Why do you think so many people are moving here from Melbourne?

Thank you for allowing me to speak on Mal Baker's behalf.