

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 446

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Request to be heard?: No

**Full Name:** Rachel Stagg

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** lettersubmission.

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** see attached submission

23rd October 2020

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing in response to the EES conducted by Kalbar for the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project. I was born in Bairnsdale and have lived here, in this area for 37 years. My husband and I have 2 beautiful young children and we are about to embark on building our 'forever home' in a beautiful rural setting, near the Mitchell River on the outskirts of Bairnsdale. I am a passionate local health care professional and my husband runs a small local business in Bairnsdale.

I am not against mining in general and understand the need for sourcing these resources, but I am very strongly opposed to the proposed mine at the Glenaladale site, due to its geographical location.

I do not believe the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project should go ahead at Glenaladale, East Gippsland, for the following reasons:

The proposed site is right on the doorstep of the Heritage listed Mitchell River and runs alongside our Lindenow vegetable fields. Kalbar's geochemistry report lists a number of radioactive and cancer causing substances that will be present in the dust generated from the mine's activity. Kalbar acknowledges that they cannot eliminate the dust. The dust generated will impact our region; from both airborne particles and run off of the site, contaminating the Mitchell River (only a mere 350m downwind from the mine). Bioaccumulation of the radiation, heavy metals and minerals (including Silica) will contaminate and poison food crops, meat and fish, agriculture, aquaculture, air and the overall health of the Gippsland Lakes (an important Ramsar Listed wetland). These agents all pose serious health concerns and potential for causing illness and disease, to the local communities.

An open-cut mine and a food producing industry cannot co-exist side by side! There is an already a well established successful Mitchell River Valley vegetable industry that produces a large percentage of Victoria's fresh produce at the site, and employs 1500 to 2000 people. The Mitchell River flats are home to fresh salad and vegetable farms, feed crops, meat and livestock industry, ie Victoria's Food Bowl; some of which are within 400m of the proposed site. Kalbar have suggested that they will employ a mere 200 (mostly fly-in fly-out contract positions).

Kalbar have a huge need for water - 3 billion litres of water annually, which is the same amount as all the domestic and commercial use in East Gippsland annually! This region is already adversely affected by drought and tight water restrictions every year, imposed especially on the local farming and agricultural industry along the Mitchell River.

If that same amount of water was redirected into the established farming industry that is already there; it could create 4 times more jobs than those mentioned in Kalbar's proposal. According to the National Farmers Federation Statistics: every agricultural job creates 4.2 indirect jobs versus Kalbar's website claiming 1 mining job creates 1 indirect job.

Kalbar's high need for water, on top of our already tight water restrictions imposed every summer, would lead to tighter, earlier and more lengthy periods of restrictions, plus reduced fresh water availability in the Mitchell River, this would in turn affect the health of the Gippsland Lakes.

The Woodglan reservoir, where our domestic and commercial water is stored for the Shire, servicing approximately 24,000 people, is 3.5km downwind from the mine. This poses a huge risk on our drinking water as well as those on tank water in the area.

The Tailings dam positioned on the Perry River, feeding into Lake Wellington, part of the Gippsland lakes, is of concern. Flocculants used on the tailings, pose a serious chemical risk to aquatic life and the health of the lake system, should flooding or spills occur.

The proposed area, The Fingerboards, is known to be a site of great Aboriginal cultural heritage and significance, thus inevitably leading to Indigenous heritage totally destroyed. Mitigation measures will not avoid destruction of this Indigenous cultural sacred heritage.

The mined area would mean removal of 700 large mature trees. Will these get replanted elsewhere? Years and Years are needed to reestablish mature trees and what would happen to the other local flora and fauna species in the area? Add this to an already devastated region significantly impacted by the recent 2019/2020 bush fires - our East Gippsland flora and fauna will take decades to recover.

Government statistics on other Victorian mine sites show that rehabilitation and revegetation is extremely unlikely, as only one Victorian mine has ever been classified as fully rehabilitated.

As a passionate angler, the health of Gippsland Lakes is of great importance to me. We spend our weekends immersed in our natural wonderland, walking in the National Parks, and frequenting the beaches, lakes and waterways. As previously mentioned, recovering from the bushfire season impact on Tourism and local business, if the health of our waterways and local environment is impacted by becoming a mining town, these businesses will suffer irreparably.

It is unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of private land to be used by the mine for infrastructure that is located outside the mining project area: for water pipelines, bore pumps, bore fields, roadworks, new powerlines, easements, rail siding and vegetation removal. Why wasn't this a matter for East Gippsland Shire council to determine?

There are many many reasons why the proposed mine cannot be supported due to its proposed geographical location, namely the risks and impact on the health of local community, the risks and impact on the environment and risks and impact on a successful food producing Industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Stagg