

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

524

Request to be heard?: No - but please email me a copy of the
Timetable and any Directions

Full Name: Rhys Hine

Organisation:

Affected property: Woodglen Road

Attachment 1: Rhys_Hine_Submi

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

Dear Panel and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission relating to Kalbar's proposal to develop an open cut mineral sands mine at the Fingerboards.

I am strongly opposed to the development of Kalbar's proposal for a mine which will be located in an area which poses huge risks to the landholders and residents within and up to ten kilometres from the site, which is on an elevated plateau above the Mitchell River which every vegetable grower on the Lindenow Flood Plain draws water from to irrigate their crops.

I am one of these vegetable growers and rely on the quantity and quality of the water in the Mitchell to run my business efficiently. I am a third generation food producer and grow my vegetable crops on the land my grandfather originally used for sheep farming. My son Ryan is only young still but is already showing a keenness to farm our land and take over the business when I retire. He would be the fourth generation to carry on the family business. However if Kalbar's mine is approved for development, this will no longer be an option as the whole future of our business will be in doubt.

Our land extends along the bank of the Mitchell opposite the proposed mine site, so that when the prevailing westerly and south-westerly winds blow dust and any invisible airborne particles of silica or radioactive substances present in the dust will blanket the vegetables. Even if Kalbar denies the presence of these carcinogenic substances in the dust, the dust itself will be an issue. We grow sweet corn, broccoli and cauliflowers and although the broccoli can be washed in the river water, the dust on the cauliflowers can't be washed off as these vegetables are sent to market from the paddock without further processing.

As we not only irrigate the vegetables with river water but wash some varieties and pack them with ice made from the river water it is absolutely essential that the Mitchell River water is free from contaminants of any kind. Our produce is audited regularly and the water is also tested once a year for safety and quality. The outlets I sell to demand high quality produce and I am proud to have built up an excellent reputation for high quality produce and have continued to meet the expectations of a 'clean' and 'green' reputation that ensures that the wholesalers and retailers whom I supply continue to buy my vegetables.

Another of my concerns if the mine is approved is that public perception about an open cut mine so close to the river and where vegetables are grown is the damage to my reputation as a producer of 'clean, green' produce. People in this region are familiar with the tall chimneys of the open cut coal mine in the Latrobe Valley and the polluting haze that can be identified from many kilometres away and gives the Valley a reputation of not being desirable. Even if Kalbar's mine is not a coal mine,

most people will associate an open cut mine with produce grown in its vicinity being unclean.

Even if undeserved, damage to the reputation of one's product can be long lasting. Many of the vegetables I grow are packaged with a label identifying our farm "Sow Fresh Produce, grown in Woodglen in the Lindenow Valley". "Sow Fresh" is the name of our business and it is important to me that the quality of the produce I grow lives up to its name.

Every business has to comply with strict OH&S standards and so I also worry about my workers being so close to the mine site and exposed to any toxic dust containing tiny Silica particles that could cause respiratory problems. Kalbar has not been prepared so far to offer any written guarantees about the issues of contaminants in the dust or water BEFORE it begins mining. Instead it offers mitigation strategies to reduce risks, minimize risk, ameliorate situations where there could be issues. To say they can stop UP TO 90% of the dust is not very reassuring. Over 15 or so years of mining, followed by 5 years of rehabilitation, even 10% of the total of dust produced could be quite sufficient to cause health issues and contamination issues for the soil in which the vegetables are grown. The flow of toxic waste and sediment down the gullies of the mine site won't be stopped by the 19 dams if heavy storms or flooding rain cause a breach in the walls of one or more of these dams. Kalbar has been deaf to the advice given by experienced landholders who have warned them of the occurrence of East Coast Lows, of the sodic nature of the soil which is responsible for the severe tunnel erosion on the site, or the extremely strong gusting winds. It is not sufficient to claim that they have accounted for a one in a hundred year event if they have not described in reassuring detail what they will do if such an event arises and if they haven't demonstrated that they are prepared for unplanned and unanticipated natural or manmade disasters. Anything can happen in the 20 year duration of the mine and to add the risk of climate change and global warming during that time to an already risky location for the mine site makes the proposal of an open cut mine in this location is a totally unacceptable risk.

To allow this mine to proceed is to put at risk not only my farm but the farms of all the vegetable growers on the Mitchell River Flats and the jobs of those many people who are employed in the local vegetable industry.

And it is for this reason that I am opposed to this mining project.

yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Rhys Hine