

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

557

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

Full Name: Tracie Thompson

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Submission_re_Ka

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing this submission about the EES for the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project and to inform you that I strongly oppose the mine.

My family and I have lived in East Gippsland for the past 6 years. Our main reason for moving to this region was to leave the city, Melbourne, and create a life of less pollution and having the ability to consume locally sourced food and to grow our own produce. We also love bush walking as well as many other outdoor activities. Some of our favourite places stand to be greatly affected by this proposed mine site and I have summarising why I am opposed to this development below.

HEALTH:

The mining proponent Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd has acknowledged there are radioactive substances being mined including rare-earths. Below ground level and undisturbed these substances do not pose a health risk. It is when they are excavated and crushed that dust is generated, dispersing these materials into the environment; this poses a health risk.

The full analysis of the ore body hasn't been disclosed. I don't trust the information in the EES because we don't know what the laboratory was asked to analyse. We don't know the real dangers to human/animal health. I ask the Panel to ensure this information is fully disclosed and closely examined because of the risks. Dust travels far, so contamination and health risks are real concerns. You, the Panel have a duty of care not to add to the cancer burden of the community.

The mine is too close to where many families live, farm and work. I am very concerned about health risks in the future such as lung disease from respirable silica for my family and all of the other residents of this area. It is irresponsible for the Government to put the community at risk and the number of houses near the mine has been under-reported. Council's 'Lindenow & District Community Plan' did not foresee a mine in that area. Government needs to recognise the pre-existing residential and agricultural land use. Noise from a mine operating 24 hours a day 7 days a week will be untenable and very stressful, and I don't accept that the noise levels won't be a problem.

The Woodglan Reservoir where domestic and commercial water is stored for the whole Shire is 3.5kms downwind from the mine and those on tank water living near the mine will also be at risk of water contamination. What are the contamination risks?

GUNAIKURNAI NATION:

Acts of cultural genocide are currently being waged against The First Nations people of Australia. There are unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are stated as being highly likely to be present and will be impacted. Given the massive excavation down to 45m, it will be impossible to avoid destruction of artefacts and heritage. This is unacceptable. Their mitigation measures will not avoid the obliteration of cultural heritage.

LOCAL BUSINESS:

The vegetable industry in the Lindenow Valley is only 500m downwind from the mine with most of the vegetables grown above ground, so dust from the mine is a high risk. I do not want my family eating contaminated vegetables or risk that industry being shut down which could result in big job and financial losses for our region. Water to irrigate the crops comes from the Mitchell River. The mine is on the other side of the river on top of a plateau. There are risks of the river being contaminated, impacting on the crops, fishing, agriculture, the health of the rivers and the Gippsland Lakes (an important Ramsar-listed wetland). My husband works for one of the numerous companies that rely on the health of the Mitchell river to conduct their business, so this issue personally affects our family's financial future.

ENVIRONMENT:

There will be a tailings dam 90 hectares in size, that's nearly 1 square km. It will contain mine tailings waste and flocculants (chemicals used to treat the tailings) which have warnings on safety data sheets about being harmful to aquatic life. Located on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell Rivers there is a stated risk of leaching from the dam. If there is a 1 in 100-year flood, tailings waste & flocculants could be released into the creeks/ivers, harming aquatic life and aquifers. The risks are considerable and foreseeable given the many examples of dam failures (Benambra example) so the risk of failure can't be low. There are no details in the EES for the dam's construction so how can the risk of failure be low? Over 3 billion litres of water (3GL) is required by the mine annually for up to 15 years (the maximum life of the mine) for processing and to control dust. This shows how big a problem dust is. What will the impact of this be on bores, aquifers and the Mitchell River? According to irrigation data, if the 3GL of water was redirected to the horticulture industry, 3 times more jobs could be created than proposed by the mine. With 13 square kms of land being mined a lot of trees and habitat will be removed including over 700 large mature trees. Flora and fauna species are threatened. EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area to know the full ramifications of what is at risk. This could mean more loss than reported in the EES. The landscape of the area will never be replaced; offsets can't address this loss. Full rehabilitation rarely happens. Will progressive rehabilitation actually occur (example is Douglas mine at Balmoral in Western Victoria where a toxic waste dump was left behind)? The risks of no rehabilitation are high if the mine goes into 'care & maintenance' with the tailings dam and 19 dams on gullies/creeks being abandoned. Rehabilitation bonds have been shown to be grossly inadequate to cover costs.

TOURISM:

Our region relies heavily on tourism. The recent events of bushfire and the COVID19 virus have had a horrendous impact on the many businesses that rely on the tourists to survive. Visitors to our region come for our pristine waterways and I fear that tourists will not want to come visit an area that has had its pristine environment impacted by the side effects of this mine.

And finally in response to the Draft Planning Scheme Amendment - Attachment C in the EES, I think 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 boundary for: water pipelines, bore pumps, bore field, roadworks, new powerlines, easements, rail siding and vegetation removal. Why wasn't this part of the mine project area? Why isn't this a matter for the EG Shire Council to determine?

I thank the Panel members for the opportunity to make this submission and for taking it into consideration.

Tracie Thompson