

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 840

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Request to be heard?: No

**Full Name:** Joan Kimm

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:**

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** See attached submission

Kalbar Operations Pty. Ltd., Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine, Bairnsdale.  
 To the Inquiry and Advisory Committee,  
 EES for the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine ("the Mine")

This submission is a protest against the proposal by Kalbar Operations Pty. Ltd. ("Kalbar") to mine mineral sands at a site near Lindenow, Bairnsdale, East Gippsland for export to Asia.

### The mining operation

Kalbar Operations Pty. Ltd. ("Kalbar") proposes mining mineral sands ("mining") at a mine site ("the mine") near Lindenow, Bairnsdale, in the East Gippsland Shire. **Mining is to be carried out for over 20 years to extract approximately 170 million tonnes of ore for export to Asia.** The operation of such a large open cut mine (13 sq. kms. and 45m deep) and the works necessary for such a largescale enterprise would inevitably wreak havoc on the present rural community and its environs and economy. There are **19 residences /land holdings which would be directly impacted** by the mine workings, and over **91 landholdings with 79 residences within 2 kms. of the mine's boundary.** It is absolutely unacceptable that compulsory acquisition of private land could be contemplated for mining infrastructure and associated works such as railway sidings, a bore field and bore pumps etc. This community, its horticulture, agriculture, and water use are threatened by environmental damage from the mine workings. Water contamination could possibly impact on **Gippsland Lakes** (a popular tourist site and Ramsar-listed wetland). Further the proposed mine is within the locality of the **Den of Nargun, a sacred Indigenous site**, and hence the immediate, and even remoter, vicinity to that site can be assumed to be of importance for Indigenous heritage. Thus, this mine would imperil the viability of the local community's health by exposure to noise and dust (which is possibly radioactive), its agricultural enterprise and thus its economic viability. There is also a probable adverse impact on the immediate and remoter East Gippsland environment as well as on Melbourne's vegetable markets.

### 1. Water Usage and Contamination

- (a) **Amount:** The annual water requirements for processing and controlling dust would be over 3 billion litres of water (3 GL). This huge amount of water is squandering an invaluable resource in an area which has just suffered a prolonged drought and in a country where water is always precious.
- (b) **Irrigation: Agriculture: A More Productive Use:** The proposed mine is in a rural area where 3GL of water would be more productively and carefully used for horticulture and cattle rearing.
- (c) **Depletion of the water table:** The mine is only **360 metres** from the Mitchell and Perry Rivers. The adverse impact of using the Mitchell River ("the river") its aquifers and bores to control dust would seriously affect the vegetable growing industry by draining a resource which, as considered below, is vital for vegetable production. Further depletion of the water table would ultimately adversely affect the already drought affected, but environmentally precious, Gippsland Lakes. Water depletion will cause the further accumulation of silt, which is already a hazard for the environment of the Lakes.
- (d) **Contamination of Woodglen water reservoir and tank water**  
 The Shire's Woodglen water reservoir is only 3.5 kms. downwind from the mine, and both the reservoir and adjacent rural properties on tank water are at risk of contamination from mine dust which as considered further below is a likely health hazard.
- (e) **Contamination from the mine tailings dam**



It is proposed that the mine tailings dam, which is almost 1 square km, will be on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell Rivers. This would be an enormous dam. The mine tailings waste and the treating chemicals are known to be harmful to aquatic life. If this dam, which is on high ground, should be breached or flooded, the tailings waste and chemicals could seriously contaminate creeks and rivers.

## 2. Destruction of Horticulture:

- (a) **Water:** The mine is 500 metres from the Lindenow Flats the largest vegetable growing area in Victoria. The vegetable growing industry in the Mitchell River Valley is worth \$150 m. annually. The threat to irrigation water because of the mine's requirements, and/or of possible contamination of irrigation water, and the ensuing potential loss of vegetable growing areas is **a serious threat to the economy of Gippsland and of Melbourne**. The security of vegetable production and supply is of vital importance to both these areas and markets, particularly as spreading housing developments, for example in Bacchus Marsh and Thorpedale have destroyed vegetable production in areas close to Melbourne.
- (b) **Mine dust:** Kalbar has admitted that it cannot control all the dust which would be generated by the mine. Dust contamination threatens horticulture. Hence the viability of an entire agricultural industry and the concomitant loss of livelihood and destruction of a community and an important part of the State economy is at risk because of a mine of which the most lucrative benefits will be enjoyed by foreign entrepreneurs.

## 3. Employment and tourism

The cultivation of, and marketing of, vegetables creates employment. If the 3GL of water required per annum for the proposed operation of the mine was released to increase vegetable production in the Mitchell River valley it is calculated that 3 times more jobs could be created in cultivation and marketing. This is many times a more useful and continuous use of land, and a permanent and productive use, which would feed a growing population in Melbourne

## 4. Health Risks

The mine will be too close to populated areas, a thorough survey of the local inhabitants is imperative before any decision is made. It is feared that the number of the potentially adversely affected population, whether inhabitants or workers, has been underestimated. Even so a complete survey of the potentially affected population must be conducted. Kalbar Operations Pty. Ltd. admits that there will be mining of rare earths which are expected to contain highly toxic carcinogenic heavy metals such as Arsenic, Chromium, Thorium, Titanium, Uranium and Vanadium. Included are **radio-active substances** which are safe when inert in the ground but potentially dangerous once mined. Airborne silica in the dust, if inhaled, causes cancer and lung diseases. Therefore, excavation of, and crushing of, this material would spread dust into the environment which raises associated issues being:

- (a) Consideration of the possible adverse impact of on the local population and on farm animals
- (b) Dust could contaminate the surrounding water usage and vegetable cultivation, which, combined with the loss of water, would destroy completely horticultural industry in the vicinity of the mine.



- (c) It is proposed that the mine will operate 24 hours a day seven days a week. Hence consideration of noise pollution is an issue. An associated health concern is the possibility of the local community being affected by vibrations or tremors from the continuous use of heavy machinery.

## 5. Traffic

- (a) Road usage, road deterioration and traffic hazards are an issue of concern to both the immediate in the vicinity of the mine and the East Gippsland community as it is proposed that B double trucks would be taking great quantities of ore to a port or rail head. The Princes Highway in the vicinity of Bairnsdale is already a heavily trafficked route both for tourists, agricultural and commercial transport. This highway is not built to accommodate continuous movement of B double trucks. Truck movement of mine products would create a dangerous hazard in an already heavily used highway.
- (b) Rural minor roads are narrow and cannot well accommodate B double trucks without creating hazards for other road users.
- (c) The plan to transport mine products by rail is **speculative at best**. It would depend on the construction of a railway siding and a successful upgrade of the railway line in the vicinity of the Avon River rail overpass at Stratford and whether the traffic involved in the transfer of the minerals could be accommodated at Bairnsdale.

## 6. Habitat destruction

- (a) Habitat clearance will threaten already endangered threatened species such as the vulnerable grey headed flying fox, the threatened yellowbellied sheath tail bat and the masked owl.
- (b) The proposed mine will embrace 13 square kms. of land which would cover an enormous amount of vegetation including the loss of approximately 700 large mature trees which would inevitably entail a great loss of birdlife. A comprehensive survey of flora and fauna cannot properly estimate the ongoing adverse impact of such a largescale removal of trees from the environment. The projected clearance of vegetation would inevitably be an environmental disaster especially in the context of the other adverse environmental affects listed above.
- (c) It would be impossible to rectify the devastation caused by mine workings on the scale proposed by this commercial enterprise which is directed to shipping mine products overseas.

## 7. Conclusion

It is unacceptable that Kalbar Operations Pty. Ltd., a foreign commercial enterprise, could, or should, exploit natural assets in Victoria and create all the associated environmental problems and deleterious community outcomes discussed above. **In short precious Australian natural resources and a rural community and its economy would be destroyed or plundered to enhance foreign economic activity.** As well as environmental damage to valuable agricultural areas, and to the environment, and destruction of wildlife and forest, rural livelihoods derived from agriculture will be destroyed permanently, water resources will be drained, necessary vegetable production will cease and large tracts of land will be irreversibly destroyed in order to enhance the profits of a foreign company.