

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

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

Full Name: Hilary Stripp

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: submission_re_mi

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. I live in East Bairnsdale, within easy walking distance of the Mitchell River, and I swim in it in summer. I have a tank that fills from my roof that I use for drinking water. My family have holidayed on the Gippsland Lakes for most of my life, until we moved here permanently in 1981. I'm deeply concerned that the region I love will be severely and irrevocably damaged by the mine, for short term gain for a very few, (and those few quite probably not even local). I am strongly opposed to the mine, as the potential destruction and the irrevocable nature of that destruction of the area of the mine, the waterways above and below ground, the food-growing and nature-based tourism which is the main feature of our region far outweighs the glossy-brochure benefits that who knows how much money has been paid to feed us as propaganda in our local papers (page 3 every week), and buy "social licence" by way of donations to our schools and community groups.

This community is still recovering from fires that have been widely proclaimed as "unprecedented" and the restrictions brought on by the covid19 pandemic. We have been in the throes of a long running drought, and climate change is making severe events such as these likely to be more frequent. It has been established statistically that spikes in domestic violence and other trauma behaviour in communities occur between 3 and 5 years after a natural disaster or war. Add to this the stress of a noisy, polluting mine, extra truck traffic on our roads and the loss of existing jobs in horticulture and tourism, plus the risk of toxic, radioactive dust being carried into town on the prevailing westerly winds, affecting the drinking water of everyone who collects water in tanks from their roof, and the overall wellbeing outlook for our communities would look very poor indeed. Like a mining town, no longer a tourism gateway to one of the most stunning and diverse regions in Victoria.

Our community of ratepayers and citizens is already dealing with the non-rehabilitation of another mine at the top of the Tambo river, and the risk to the waterways of toxic overflow from a failing tailings dam. Kalbar propose a tailings dam above the Perry and Mitchell Rivers, to hold tailings wastes and flocculants which are known to be harmful to aquatic life. The Mitchell, Perry and the Tambo flow into the Ramsar-listed wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes, and toxic flow into these rivers via water (in the event of a 1 in a hundred year flood) or dust puts at risk the feeding and breeding grounds of many species of migratory birds, fisheries and the famous populations of Burranan dolphin, known only in these Lakes and Port Phillip Bay. Full rehabilitation is rare, and rehabilitation bonds are highly unlikely to cover costs if the mine were to go into "care and maintenance", leaving the community once again to bear the brunt financially, and the environment ongoingly.

The rivers are stressed enough as it is. The last fire season showed the Tambo being clogged with ash and debris when the "unprecedented" fires were followed by heavy rain events. That could easily be the Mitchell, next fire season. Kalbar needs over 3 billion litres of water per year for processing and dust suppression for 15 years. How then can our river maintain environmentally healthy flows into the Lakes? We're already on permanent water restrictions. What will happen to the groundwater flows? What will happen to irrigation? To town water? To the fisheries? To my summer swims?

Kalbar Operations Ltd is a new company with no experience operating a mine. Why should we have any faith at all that they will even have the capability to conduct their operations with safety and integrity? Mining in this country, even in this state is rife with broken promises as far as community wellbeing, environmental rehabilitation and respect for Traditional Owners is concerned. The recent example of Rio Tinto blithely destroying a 40,000 year old sacred site seems to be more common than the opposite. This country is at a place where we need to be listening to Traditional Owners, and we have a sizeable "mob" here in this region. I listened to a recording of a recent meeting of GLaWAC, and 81% of their members voted in opposition to the mine in a snap poll. I want to listen to and honour the first peoples of this place, and they seem pretty clearly opposed.

It's also been explained to me that the mapped "resource" that Kalbar is looking to mine goes far beyond the perimeter of the existing application, and that if this mine is allowed to proceed, they would be able to extend their operations even more into surrounding areas, without having to go

through rigorous process to gain permission. Once they have their foot in the door, that would be the end of our ability to curb their activities.

Also, It is not acceptable 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?

The Honourable Harvest is a protocol of reciprocal tending, as explained by Robin Wall Kimmerer in her 2012 TEDx talk. It is a process whereby we ask for what we need, and listen for the answer, even if it is "no". We tend, take only what is needed, share and never take the first or the last of anything. I look at the area this mine proposal covers, and the context of river, groundwater, lakes, farmland. I listen to the indigenous people who've known and tended these lands for tens of thousands of years and who have cultural heritage sites scattered throughout. I listen, and I hear, the answer is "no". The land here, the water here, the community, the life here cannot recover from a mine such as this. I look at other areas where mines such as this have been allowed to go ahead, and I see dishonourable harvest, without listening, without requisite tending and proper exchange. I see taking more than is needed, and giving back much less than is required. Please do not let that happen here.

There are many more points I could have raised, many that others will cover in their submissions. But I am tired. This year I've dealt with the fires, grieved the destruction of the forests where I walk at Sarsfield, been stood down and stood up again, had to put my business on hold due to covid, care for my elderly mother, and now find time to speak up in my opposition to this mine. Progress of this sort is not inevitable. Glossy brochures and hiring tons of advertorial space don't convince. Please do not give Kalbar permission to proceed.

Thankyou, Panel members, for the opportunity to make my thoughts know in this submission.

Hilary Stripp, RCST.