

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

664

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Wendy Smith

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Mine.docx

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

engage.vic.gov.au/fingerboards-IAC

To The Inquiry and Advisory Committee collecting submissions to consider the environmental effects of the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project.

I wish to register my objection to the following application for a sand mine that has been put forward by The Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project

Reference Number: 2016-R06

I am concerned by this proposal for sandmining

I note that under section 2A of the Act the Minister is obliged to consider the environmental consequences of a decision regarding applications. The principles of sustainable development, which are outlined in the Act set out a compelling case for taking a precautionary approach to possible future impacts of mining and drilling operations. I believe there will be major impacts from any sand mining operations proposed in this East Gippsland Region

I hold extreme reservations about

- the development of a mine with a sole purpose of exporting rare earth minerals for use overseas - noting where complex mining projects with significant potential impacts on the environment, there should be a clear focus on delivering maximum benefits for Australia, and primarily be pursued where they directly support emerging Australian industries, in particular in the renewable energy sector.
- The conclusions stated with respect to the environmental effects of the project and their significance and acceptability.
- The findings on whether acceptable environmental outcomes can be achieved, having regard to legislation, policy, best practice, and the principles and objectives of ecologically sustainable development.

- The location of the mine in an area where it has the potential to impact on up to 7 small villages and in a pristine environmental area with tourist Implications.

I have concerns with the Environmental Statement Summary Report in a range of areas including but not limited to:

Water impacts

This project bounded by two rivers, the Perry River and Mitchell Rivers, and will have enormous impact on the local and extended water table and surface runoff over a wide area with the Mitchell River flowing into Lake King.

Groundwater The summary report states “The modelling found that groundwater levels in the immediate vicinity of the borefield would reduce by 12.5 metres during construction and 14 m during operations.” This is a massive uptake of water and in these unpredictable times of climate change extreme care needs to be taken with water use and conservation. Victoria has recently suffered from more than a decade of drought, which put significant pressure on natural landscapes, ground, and surface water. There is no guarantee that this will not become more normal in the future. This needs to be considered carefully when allocating large amounts of water for mining operations.

Surface Water

The Mitchell River flows through Bairnsdale and discharges to Jones Bay and Lake King within the Gippsland Lakes. The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site is located approximately 25 kilometres southeast of the project area. The potential for contamination is enormous.

The Summary states “Where possible, clean water upstream of the active mine void will be diverted to avoid generating additional stormwater that has come into contact with mined or disturbed areas.” As you also state “Streams only flow in these gullies after heavier periods of rainfall” p3 (in

the mine area) **Where Possible** does not generate confidence in the competent management of surface water.

Air Quality Emissions of dust and exhaust pollutants due to earthworks, wind erosion from bare ground and stockpiles, vehicle movements along unsealed roads and the use of on-site diesel generators have the potential to affect all residents in the nearby villages. Any residents and children with asthma and/or lung related disorders will be adversely affected. This becomes even more significant when the possible widespread lung damage from smoke in last season's bushfires as well as covid are taken into consideration There is potential for dust to impact on local horticultural enterprises and private vegetable gardens. As there is not a current regulatory standard for dust deposition levels on vegetables this becomes a concern for both growers and householders in the area. New sandmining operations will add huge greenhouse emissions to the atmosphere. Because sand mining is a single-use option for land where it occurs, this would threaten on-going production in what is a significant farming region.

Noise and vibration

Page 17 of the report "Noise levels during the evening would comply with relevant noise criteria at four of the identified receptors and exceed the criteria at nine sensitive receptors." This is not good enough! How are you going to control the noise levels not only during the construction but also during the mining phases?

I do not believe it is acceptable to be putting prime agricultural country at risk from sandmining operations when we know about the significant negative impacts associated with sandmining. There can be little doubt that any sand mining activity over East Gippsland would have a massive impact on people living in the surrounding villages and even further tourist destinations such as Lake King and Lakes Entrance. The mining will be responsible for increased noise, greatly increased traffic including large

trucks and heavy equipment, and dust. This is a rural area, which has a strong focus on nature-based tourism. There are many small businesses which are reliant on weekend and holiday trade. The villages and surrounding areas would be transformed through having a sand mining operation nearby. It is hard to imagine that this will not impact disastrously on tourism visitation both through East Gippsland and surrounding areas.

I urge the Minister to act to protect this region by refusing to grant this particular project, more broadly, to put a moratorium in place on any new sand mining proposals until there has been a more thorough assessment of the likely impacts on rural communities, biodiversity and water, and contribution to the state's food production and long term food security. Such an assessment must also include likely greenhouse pollution.

Summary

For the reasons outlined above, we urge you to reject the proposal for this mining permit.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Wendy Smith.

Wendy Smith