

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

682

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

Full Name: Janeen Pamela Sharp

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: EES_Submission.p

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing this submission in regard to the EES for the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project. I strongly oppose the proposed mine as the location is completely inappropriate and there are many serious risks posed to the health of the local population, economy and environment should the mine proceed.

As a business person and fifth generation local, I believe the mineral sands mine proposed by Kalbar Operations will provide no net gain what so ever for either our local community, economy or the environment or even our country considering it's ownership structure.

I am not anti-mining and as a business person I understand the need for economic growth in our area. I am against mining in inappropriate locations which is so obviously the case with the mine proposed by Kalbar Operations.

We already have a multi-million dollar vegetable industry in the Lindenow Valley which is just 500 metres downwind from the proposed mine. Some of those businesses are organic food enterprises and the mineral sands mine will result in significant airborne dust contamination putting all of them instantly out of business.

The proposed mine site is only 350 meters from the heritage listed Mitchell River and the district's water supply is also down wind of the mine. The Mitchell River feeds the internationally significant and Ramsar protected Gippsland Lakes wetlands and the ecologically sensitive Gippsland Lakes on which a massive tourism, boating and fishing industry is based and in which a rare species of dolphin, the Burrunan Dolphin, exists.

Drought conditions are not uncommon for our region and at times there has not been enough water for our vegetable industry to irrigate, which effects employment and productivity and yet a mining company could be given priority access to water that at times we cannot spare even for our food crops. Our region is a food bowl for Victoria purportedly estimated to produce 60% of Victoria's fresh produce. Billions of litres of water will be required by the proposed open cut mine for processing and dust suppression annually for up to 15 years and water is a way more precious commodity in our region than anything Kalbar Operations plans to pull out of the ground and sell to China. The amount of water Kalbar will require could be utilised for more productive uses such as agriculture, employing many more people in an industry more compatible with the geography and environment than the mine could ever employ.

I have heard that Government statistics show that of the 150 mines operated in Victoria only *one* mine has ever been classified as fully rehabilitated which does not give one any faith in the ability of an inexperienced mining company like Kalbar Operations, to remediate and rehabilitate the mine site.

Last year I attended a meeting of the East Gippsland Shire council out of concern relating to the proposed mine. I heard at that Council Meeting that Kalbar have signed a Heads of Agreement with Chinese state owned company, Chinalco, who have an absolutely horrendous record for human and environmental safety and have even been found guilty of mining outside their approved lease territory in China, poisoning water and even being reportedly responsible for killing people. A Chinese company who does not even care about its own people and one would consequently think they certainly won't have a care for our beautiful area or our community.

I ask the Panel to consider the following points all of which are greatly concerning to me.

1. I have grave concerns about the planned tailings dam which is proposed to be almost 1 square km in size. The waste and the flocculants are all harmful to aquatic life and will without a doubt end up in the Perry and Mitchell Rivers during significant flood events. Kalbar Operations have stated that

there is risk of leaching from the dam so the risks have been established and while they are stated as being relevant in a one-in-100-year flood, I believe we have had two such events in my lifetime (I am 50). The risks identified are considerable and given our weather is becoming more unstable with more significant rainfall events occurring throughout Australia as a whole the risk of failure cannot be low. The EES does not provide any details of the dam construction so how can we be assured of the risk level. We know that certain engineering designs for tailings dams are prone to failure over the longer term yet we are not told anything about the engineering of same. Tailings dams fail at 100 times the rate of water-holding dams. There are no details in the EES for the dam's construction so how can the risk of failure be low.

2. I ask the Panel to determine what type of engineering is proposed to construct the tailings dam. If the proposed construction engineering is based on what is known as an "Upstream dam", then the whole construction should be aborted. International engineering experts have been examining this damn model and believe it should be discontinued as it will inevitably fail due to the phenomena of liquefaction, whereby the dam walls liquefy and fail. "Upstream" tailings dams have failed the world over after long periods of time in recent times Canada 2014, Brazil 2015, Australia 2018, Brazil 2019, and many more further back in time.
3. 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 in the past been shown to be grossly inadequate to cover costs. The East Gippsland Shire Council would be bankrupted by an obligation to remediate the mine site given it's proposed size.
4. Kalbar Operations has acknowledged that there are radioactive minerals which will be mined as part of the rare-earths extraction process. Given the processing will involve crushing and produce dust these radio-active materials will be released into the environment and pose a multi-faceted health risk. The community should not be exposed to these carcinogenic materials just for the sake of company profits to benefit a few.
5. Wind generally blows from a westerly direction across the mine site which means that Kalbar Operations mine site is up wind of the Lindenow Valley vegetable farms, our regional water storage facility and the local township.
6. The domestic and commercial water supply for the whole shire is stored at the Woodglen Reservoir downwind from the mine and the dust from the mine risks contaminating not only the Reservoir but also the rain water tanks of those residents living near the proposed mine site.
7. I have no faith in the information provided in the EES as we are not told what the contracted laboratory was required to analyse. I ask that the Panel ensures that this information is made public by requesting Kalbar Operations to fully disclose this information for the Panel and the public to thoroughly examine.
8. I have serious concerns about lung disease caused by respirable silica. Given how far dust travels the Panel needs to take very seriously their duty of care not to add to the cancer burden of the community. The mine is too close to where many people live and work and the number of houses near the mine has been under-reported.
9. 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 unbearable for the residents in the area and I don't accept that noise levels won't be a problem given how close the mine will be to the existing residences.
10. The area has an existing tourism industry on which much of the local economy depends and people will not want to come to our area if there is even a perception that our environment might be contaminated.

11. The Lindenow Valley is only 500m downwind from the mine and most crops are vegetables which are grown above ground, so dust from the mine is a high risk to crop contamination. I don't want to eat contaminated vegetables or risk the industry being shut down as this would result in massive job losses for our region from the growers, pickers, packers, processing operations, and transport and farm supply businesses not to mention the money that flows into the local economy from these business and employment associated with the vegetable industry itself. This is a multi-generational established industry with the area supplying 60% of Victoria's fresh produce and a toxic mine should not be anywhere near it.
12. 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 which is the second largest inland water way in the Southern hemisphere as well as an important Ramsar-listed wetland.
13. Irrigation data purports that if 3GL of water was redirected to the local horticulture industry, the industry, 3 times more jobs could be created than proposed by the mine. Over 3 billion litres of water will be required by the mine annually for up to 15 years (the maximum life of the mine) for processing and to control dust which just goes to show how big of a problem dust would be. Such an amount of water will impact detrimentally on bores, aquifers, the Mitchell River and environment flows into the lakes.
14. Unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are stated as being highly likely to be present and will be impacted. It will be impossible to avoid destruction of artefacts and heritage given the mine will be dug to depths down to 45 meters. There are no mitigation measures which can protect this cultural heritage from destruction.
15. In a free and democratic country it is totally unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of privately owned land to allow Kalbar Operations to build its infrastructure outside the boundary of the mining project boundary i.e. infrastructure for roadworks, power lines, rail siding, vegetation removal and more. To allow for such compulsory acquisition increases the size of the mine project area and should be a matter for determination by the East Gippsland Shire Council.

I thank the Panel for the opportunity to make a submission with regard to this matter.

Janeen Sharp