

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

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Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Melinda Louise Beacham

Organisation:

Affected property: [REDACTED] Dargo, Vic 3892

Attachment 1: Submission_to_EE

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members

I write to express my opposition to the proposed Mineral Sands Mine at Glenaladale in East Gippsland. This mine will have a detrimental effect on the surrounding environment, people living in the vicinity and other important economic industries such as food production and tourism.

My partner and I have owned a property south of Dargo for 37 years, where we lived until we needed to relocate to provide educational opportunities for our children. We now reside in Mallacoota in Far East Gippsland, but visit our property near Dargo regularly.

I am very concerned about the amount of water required for this venture and the impacts of removing this amount from the existing system. When we considered relocating in the mid 1990's, we noted that the average rainfall for Mallacoota was above 1000mm per year, while our rainfall at Dargo was approx 700 mm annually. After we moved to Mallacoota there was a 10 year drought but even after it broke, the rainfall has never returned to previous levels. So in my lifetime we have seen a 300 mm decrease in rainfall in both areas over the last 25 years. I put this down to the effects of Climate change (see Renew magazine article on "The science behind the Climate Emergency" by Emeritus Professor Will Steffen of Australian National University, member of the Climate Council of Australia). In the time I have been in Gippsland I have seen the Wonangatta River (upstream source of the Mitchell River) almost stop flowing many times and the Gippsland lakes experience severe Algal blooms, which were so toxic, that it was recommended that people and animals should not come in contact with it. This had a huge impact on tourism, social and recreational activities and the ability for others to earn income, let alone the detrimental effects on the natural environment relying on healthy water quality for survival. It concerns me that the amount of water required for this venture, (even if it is taken out and put into storage systems when high flow event take place) will endanger the water supply for the region. Even if the water is taken out of ground via bore water it will lower the aquifer or if pumped out of the river, it may increase the height of the salt water incursion up river. There are so many other users and environments downstream which rely on this water entering the system. How can we prioritise private profit over the needs of an entire community and the environment they rely on?

There is also another threat resulting from the unpredictable weather events caused by Climate change, in that rainfall that does fall, can come in higher intensity events such as severe thunderstorms dumping huge amounts of rain very quickly. In this case the 90 hectare tailings dam could overflow contaminating the environment downstream, polluting the Mitchell River and farming and vegetable growing areas in the Lindenow region.

There is also the issue of air born contamination from the dust the mine will generate during operation and transportation. Already the EES has identified dangerous radioactive substances, heavy metals and respirable silica contained in the proposed mine ore body and this poses a serious threat to the surrounding area. The prevailing Sth Westerly winds at this site will take the dust mainly in the direction of the Mitchell River valley, where it will pose a threat to people living in the vicinity and a major food production area. A large percent of Victoria's leafy greens are grown in this area and even if it is washed before consumption it can still absorb contaminates during growth and endangering people handling it during harvest. As the full analysis of the ore body has not been disclosed in the EES how can we know the full extent of this risk? I believe this information should be made available in the EES.

I am also concerned that if this mine is to go ahead, anyone driving along the Dargo Rd, living in the vicinity or visiting the area may be exposed to this contamination risk. The beautiful Den of Nargen site within the Mitchell River National Park could be impacted because it is in close proximity to the proposed mine site. This is a wonderful natural asset of the region, containing some of the most southerly examples of temperate rainforest, beside stunning river gorge views and attracts many visitors to the area. As we have seen during recent dust storm events, that travelled large distances to impact our cities, the threat to visitors and the Park are not unrealistic.

There is also the Coonawarra School camp, north of the proposed mine site, situated just before the Mitchell River National Park turn off, which should be taken into consideration.

It is my understanding that Kalbar have no history of mining experience and probably have intentions to sell the venture once it has gained the necessary approvals. This could be sold to any overseas company, resulting in the potential profits flowing out of Australia. In other areas such as the sand mine near Mildura, the employment of local people dwindled to insignificant numbers within 3 years of the mine commencing operation. How can this proposal be approved when the economic justification of employment opportunities has not been tested or the threats to existing industries calculated. Why is economic gain weighted with more value than other values, essential to quality of life, like a healthy environment, the availability of clean water and the need for developments which are sustainable and protect our future?

I also object to the clearing of mature trees on the site. I recently experienced the horrendous bushfires that impacted Mallecoota and East Gippsland last summer and spent weeks supporting the wildlife refuge and Zoos Australia Vets trying to find suitable leaves to feed injured Koalas that survived the fires. I know how little suitable habitat is left for our native fauna with so much burnt in recent fires. It is imperative that what little old growth forest remains is protected. The mature Red gums in this area are incredibly important for their hollows as nesting sites and they form of corridor to connect with other vulnerable communities further south, who need seasonal migration pathways to the mountains. Some of these trees are hundreds of years old and cannot be replaced at the end of this mines life.

I find it unacceptable that Kalber may be allowed to compulsory acquire land from adjoining landholders for mine infrastructure such as pipelines, bore fields, roads and new powerlines etc outside of the mining project boundary. Why weren't these areas included in the mine project area and why is this not to be determined by the East Gippsland Shire Council?

In conclusion when you consider the net gains to our community, against the potential harm that it may inflict on our health and the damage to the environment, I cannot see why it should be allowed to proceed. In these challenging times surely protecting our natural resources to ensure quality of life (like availability of water) are of utmost importance, rather than short term, profit driven ventures with questionable benefits to our community.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to make a submission. I hope our concerns will be taken seriously, as we are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of this proposal.

Yours sincerely Melinda Beacham