

Submission 288 Presentation on 15 July 2021

My name is Jeanette Wagner and I live in Paynesville which is on the Gippsland Lakes. I have lived in this region for 49 years and have run businesses for 47 years, all in this region. During the many years in my retail business life, I have experienced many things that affected, not only my business, but many others. The ones that affected most businesses were mainly any issues that affected the Agricultural Sector, which, ultimately, then rolled on to affect the majority of the region's businesses.

This region is built on and survives on the Agricultural Industry, AND Tourism, both of which would be severely affected by this mine, if it is allowed to proceed. This would also ultimately, roll on to less taxes being paid to the Government by businesses having to close down and less money locally because rates aren't paid by mining companies for land they are mining!

The Lindenow Flats Vegetable Growers of East Gippsland, that are as close as 500 metres from the mine site, produce a large percentage of this Nation's fresh vegetables – 30% of all of Victoria's fresh vegetables, and therefore require a huge portion of available water. The Mineral Sands Mining Company proponent has stated it will need nearly 3 gegalitres of water and 5 gegalitres if their proposed centrifuges are not feasible. It is extremely difficult for any of the growers to get an extra LITRE of water so how can an industry needing this much water be approved, especially when we one of the driest populated continents in the Southern Hemisphere!

There are also three major certified organic growers situated in that area who are regularly assessed for contamination which means there will be a lot of them out of business within a short time, with the dust created from the mine, and the winds we experience here.

How is the Government and the Mining Company going to compensate any businesses affected by this mine if it is approved to proceed? We heard from the VFF's presentation on 19 May that this would involve the growers having to take legal action and prove the source of the contamination. This is unacceptable and will threaten the livelihood of those businesses and all the local small businesses that rely on that industry for their livelihood. Under the first draft evaluation objective for the EES scoping requirements the project must maintain "the viability of other local industries". I am very concerned that the viability of the horticulture industry and those businesses that depend on that industry will be threatened if this mine project proceeds.

I am not against mining, Australia has been built on it, but not in inappropriate locations! Maybe we should do what Andrew Helps said China does – ban this kind of mining onshore – or at least we need to ban them in any important agricultural regions, such as this one which is a major food bowl for the State and Country! As we have heard there are times of the year when certain crops such as lettuces are only available here in large quantities due to our climate and soils.

To me, this should be a very easy, common sense decision. But then, there was a Death Notice for Common Sense in the Shepparton News on 1st March, 2004 stating, *"Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend by the name of Common Sense who has been with us for many years. No-one knows how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird gets the worm, and, I will add – Government decisions that will affect our environment and the coming generations severely! Common Sense was proceeded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, his wife Discretion, his Daughter Responsibility and his Son Reason. He is*

survived by two stepbrothers – My Rights and Ima Whiner. Not many attended his funeral because so few realised he was gone!”

I would like you to seriously consider if this mine was going to be within 500 metres from YOUR homes and YOUR businesses which you have built over 6 generations and you have family involved in, with the hope that grandchildren will ultimately be involved in the future. You cannot move your business, nor will you be compensated for any damage done to the business it has taken you 40 years to build, let alone the damage done to the local environment! How would you feel if a Government process approved something that would have these consequences ON YOU??

There was an article in our local paper, the Bairnsdale Advertiser, on the 2nd June, 2021, by the East Gippsland Catchment Authority stating, under the heading “Environmental Benefit”, *“that the Victorian Government remains committed to improving the health of the Gippsland Lakes, recognising the important environmental, social, cultural and economic values that it provides. Recreational fishing and improving habitat for native fish is a critical focus for future work on the Gippsland Lakes. Historical management of East Gippsland rivers saw vast quantities of wood removed in an effort to increase channel capacity and drainage. The fish habitat projects also contribute to the achievement of targets described within the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan aimed at improving and maintaining the diversity and abundance of native fish.”* If this is a Victorian Government commitment, how can they possibly consider this mine proposal with the damage it will seriously do to our waterways??

People vacation in our area because of the drawcard of the Gippsland Lakes for its fishing tourism and for recreational boating. Tourism is a major industry that employs a lot of people and contributes significantly to our economic prosperity. Many jobs in our region are also directly linked to the tourism industry.

If the Mitchell River and the Gippsland Lakes become contaminated, this industry will suffer and jobs will be lost, impacting on the viability of this important industry to the local economy. Once a reputation is lost it is difficult to recover. Also, the unique fauna and aquatic life that rely on the Gippsland Lakes for their survival such as platypus and our burrunan dolphin and other unique aquatic life, must be protected. As a Ramsar site we have a responsibility to protect this important international waterway including the Mitchell River silt jetties which are the largest digitate delta in the world.

Please carefully consider the recommendations to be made about this EES process which will severely affect this and future generations and the environment, and for which you will all be remembered forever more!

This is the wrong place for a mine, because too much is at risk.

Thank you for listening.

Jeanette Wagner