

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

168

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

Full Name: Alannah McCann

Organisation:

Affected property: [REDACTED]

Attachment 1: SUBMISSION_RE_

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

SUBMISSION RE FINGERBOARDS MINE PROJECT

Snowed and almost stunned by a 7000-page Environmental Effects Statement I am going to set down my objections to this mine in simple straightforward language.

Water

- Despite all Kalbar's assurances of low risks from potential impacts I remain unassured.
- This company plans to draw 3 GIGALITRES of water per annum from the Mitchell river and the Latrobe aquifer. This is an enormous amount from an area where vegetable farmers and pastoralists are unable to draw as much from the Mitchell as they would like.
- Drought had been with us for the last 5 years in this part of East Gippsland and continues. Water restrictions for Bairnsdale was only narrowly averted when some rain fell this last autumn. Rainfall is becoming scarcer and more unreliable with climate change and the Mitchell's flows are not what they once were. According to East Gippsland Water's water snapshot for 18th September the stream flow of the Mitchell river is only 43.9% of its 5-year average.
- River winter flows are needed to flush out the lakes to keep them from becoming too saline or too sedimented. How can Kalbar possibly take so much out of the water resources of this part of East Gippsland without detrimental effects to the Lakes?
- I do not even see the mention of the possibility of drought and how that effects the viability of their project. Climate change will make the likelihood of even more severe drought likely.
- Occasionally powerful South- East Coast Lows lash this region producing enormous flooding events which could cause Kalbar's tailings dams to flood. Is this possibility even considered?

Consultation with the community

- I think I have attended all of these. I would not really class them as consultation but as attempts at PR. Certainly the comments from the public at these meeting were 99% negative and our concerns were not assuaged. There have been huge meetings with hundred attending.
- There has been some support by some small businesses who feel they are likely to profit by the mine.

Rehabilitation – a chimaera?

The ultimate sweetener put before the community at the Kalbar community meeting just prior to Christmas was the promise of a fabulous rehabilitation of the mine site to an almost pristine condition. This would be fabulous if it could be trusted or enforced. Of all the former mine sites (150 app.) in Victoria how many have really been rehabilitated? One only, and even that one is disputed. Companies just walk away from sites when they are no longer profitable enough or if the company gets into financial difficulties.

This project did not need an elaborate and costly EES but should have been dismissed out of hand and not ever contemplated by the local or state governments. It is almost impossible for agriculture, tourism, the lakes and Ramsar listed wetlands to be accommodated in such close proximity to a sand mine. It is not worth taking these risks for a handful of jobs and some pigments for paint from a mine with a 10-year estimated life. Too much can be lost in that time. How many mining catastrophes or even slow declines do we need to see before this lesson is learnt?

No one except Kalbar will really oversee these operations. Only they will know if their tailings dams are leaking. Only they will decide if it is too windy to excavate on any given day. Will they risk their profits by being cautious? I think not.