

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

604

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

Full Name: Matthew Barry Stone

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Fingerboards_Min

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

As a member of the local community, I am opposed to this development. I am not anti-mining however I think the location of the proposed mine in proximity to the Mitchell River, Lindenow irrigators and population centres is incredibly irresponsible and bears a far too much risk. While the mine may offer some short-term economic benefits, it poses a far greater danger to existing industries that have been around long before Kalbar was interested in the area and that the community (and state) needs to thrive long after Kalbar has left. There are plenty of other places in Victoria and across Australia where mineral sands can be mined but only so much arable land that is suitable for growing vegetables, supports inland lakes and already provides so many existing jobs. To put at stake so much purely because the site is cheaper to operate is quite frankly disgusting and speaks volumes about an organisation that cares little about the local community, Victoria's food security nor the ecological health of the Gippsland Lakes.

As a mathematical modeller, I feel obliged to point out that the modelling of the impacts of dust, noise, groundwater etc. are just that, models. While they are useful, they are not a guarantee of the impacts the project will have on the surrounding area. There is far too much complexity and uncertainty from overlapping networks and systems that cannot be accurately accounted for, such as the actual connection and interaction between the various groundwater sources. Furthermore, while I am not accusing Kalbar or any affiliated parties of tweaking their models to reach desirable outcomes, that facts remain that:

- The models in the EES are subject to a whole suite of inputs, parameters and assumptions that must be decided by the modeller and can be tweaked to reach vastly different results.
- Kalbar has a vested interest in producing models that present “low-risk” scenarios.
- Any company commissioned by Kalbar to produce modelling has a vested interest in producing models that result in a positive outcome for Kalbar, so that they are more likely to be approached again for future work.

For example, in Appendix A019 – Human Health Risk Assessment, Section 9.3 concerns the effects on the drinking water but only considers overflow and seepage from the mine. Nowhere does it mention the impacts from airborne particles despite the Woodglen Reservoir being under 4 kilometres from the mine site.

On a personal note, I have a young family and have moved back to Bairnsdale to raise children but cannot in good conscious keep my children exposed to the potential radiation and dust emanating from the Fingerboards during their formative years. As I am a remote worker, I can choose to work anywhere and Bairnsdale is a good location due to the population size, amenities, proximity to Melbourne and natural assets. In the context of the current pandemic and shift to remote work, Bairnsdale is particularly well-placed to take advantage of highly paid professionals moving outside of Melbourne to prioritise their quality of life. A recent Ipsos poll (October 2020) found that in the wake of the Covid-19 lockdowns 1 in 10 Melburnians are considering a move to regional Victoria. However, the Fingerboards mine is likely to significantly impact Bairnsdale and the region's ability to attract such people who similarly to me, can live anywhere but will not compromise on the health of their family. In the current climate, the fact that this does not appear to have been factored into the economic impact assessment is astonishing.

There are many other reasons to oppose this development which I am sure will be covered in other submissions. However, I think the crux of the decision is whether some short-term economic gains are worth risking real long-term economic, environmental, and human health devastation. This mine should not be approved, please make the correct decision.