

SUBMISSION 767

Thank you for listening to me today. My name is Chloe Wagner, and I am 17 years old. I have lived in this region for my whole life and live in close proximity to the Gippsland Lakes, which have been a part of my childhood growing up here. I have always had a love for nature and the natural environment that we live in, especially the native flora and fauna. I want and have always wanted to stay in this region and raise a family here one day, but I fear the destruction and damage the proposed mineral sands mine in Glenaladale could cause and would render my home and the homes of many others, unliveable in the near future, if the mine goes ahead.

I have done research into the possible and certain effects the mine will cause, and they truly scare me. The mine would be absolutely massive and very deep, causing a scar into our ecosystem that would never really be healed, causing dangerous amounts of fine dust that will be carried throughout this area carrying dangerous chemicals that would affect the health of people living here, and who want to live here in the future. It could also cause irreversible damage to our waterways and lakes system, using more water than we have to spare, and polluting it to the point that it will be unusable in the future.

I have been fighting against this mine for two and a half years, a lot less than some people, but, it is still a massive amount of time that I have given to the cause, since I had only just turned 15.

Over the years I have spoken in council meetings, provided submissions to the EES, visited the proposed mine site, and created a petition for the youth of our community who will be the future of this area. The petition is called Our Future, Our Home, Our Voice, and reads as follows:

And I quote "This petition of concerned Victorian young residents represents the concerns for the future of this region, future businesses, future landowners, and future generations that would be severely affected by the Proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine if it is approved to go ahead in Glenaladale, near Bairnsdale. The proposed mine will have many negative effects on many precious and vital areas of our region, including existing and future multi-million-dollar agricultural industries and our fresh water supplies over an extensive area, with the mine also causing high risks of polluting our internationally recognised and highly sensitive Ramsar listed Gippsland lakes wetlands, which is known as the largest freshwater lakes system in the southern hemisphere". End of Quote.

Furthermore, we as the future leaders of this region are concerned about the health of the community, because of harmful radioactive substances produced from the mine site, as well as dangerous dust pollution, in particular, silica.

The proposed mineral sands mine will cover at least 1,675 hectares of land, and will be up to 45 meters deep, using over 3 billion litres of water per year. A wound in the land this deep will be basically irreparable, made more significant by the fact that only one mine in Victoria has ever been classified as fully rehabilitated, albeit questionably.

Our region, country, community, and world is at a vital and precarious tipping point. Every person that turns a blind eye to situations like this puts us closer to the point of no return.

We have duties as the future leaders and owners of this region and country to protect and preserve the rare, beautiful areas we have left.

We understand and appreciate the need we have for these kinds of mines and what they produce, but not in areas like this location, where they can permanently damage our landscape, community, waterways, and ecosystems.””

While this petition was aimed at the youth of our area, I had many people who did, or wanted to sign the petition, who all had a very diverse set of ages, which shows exactly how concerned the people in this community are about the proposed mine, no matter how long they have lived in the area.

I know that people would say that the youth and young people all rely on technology to live in this world, and that the mine is required to create those technologies, and while I agree with the idea that we do use technology for a lot of things, we need clean water, good food, and a healthy, safe environment more. Those are basic things that everyone needs for survival and the mine in the proposed location threatens that.

My dad and grandparents tell stories of when they could see the bottom of our lakes no matter how far across they went, and how the fish were plentiful and healthy, but I have never seen this, the water is always murky and the fish and aquatic life are so much rarer, and this is before the effects of something like the proposed mineral sands mine, which is far too close to our waterways for it not to affect them at all. The amount of pollution that would come from the mine would make the lake system that I have grown up with seem crystal clear and healthy by comparison, because no one will be able to use the water, play in and around it, and there will be no fish or sea life in our water systems.

Do you think that the lakes would be a safe place for me to bring my children to in the future? Would it be a safe place for them to swim and appreciate the beautiful lake system that this area has been blessed with? Would it be a safe place to even raise children around with the sheer amount of water poisoning that would occur if the mine proceeds? These are questions that I am deeply saddened that I even have to consider, because this is a place that I hold very dear to my heart. This is where I have grown up and where I want my family to grow up, but with the way the area is heading, I highly doubt I will ever be able to live here, especially with the health concerns that are already starting to arise in the area, the health concerns that will only worsen if the proposed mine goes ahead. We, as a community, are already being warned not to eat the fish and mussels that come from our lakes due to contamination that could be harmful to us. Imagine how quickly that would escalate with the radiation and dangerous substances that would go into the lakes, waterways and air, in large quantities if the mine is allowed to proceed.

When you make your recommendation regarding the mine I want you to consider the coming generations, and the disaster that you will be leaving behind for them, because if this mine goes ahead it will cause irreparable damage to this beautiful area, ruining it for my generation and the ones after me. Think of the people like me who want to, one day, raise a family here but who won't feel safe even coming here anymore.

This is our future, our home, our voice. Let us be heard.

Thank you.