

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

120

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Beverly Cree

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: EES_submission.d

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: see attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing this submission in relation to the EES for the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project and wish to state that I strongly oppose the mine for the reasons which I will outline below.

I have resided in the area for over 20 years and am only 6km from the proposed mine site. This area is primarily agricultural land and the Project area forms part of East Gippsland's highly valued cultural heritage which the proponent has identified as holding the following:

- 536 hectares of culturally sensitive area within and adjacent to the proposed mine footprint.
- stone artefact identified 68 surface scatters and 281 Sub surface artefacts a total of 349 found within small areas of testing across the proposed 536 hectares site.
- A Pleistocene sand dune associated with significant sites and old burial areas and are therefore typically classified as highly sensitive landforms in the Southern portion of mine footprint.

Given that the massive excavation goes down to 45m and the proponent's mitigation measures, it will be impossible to avoid the total destruction of artefacts and cultural heritage which is unacceptable.

Apart from the indigenous heritage of the area the noise from a mine operating 24hrs a day 7 days a week will be untenable and very stressful and I do not accept that the noise levels will not be a problem. This mine will have direct impact on my tourism/accommodation business - who would want to come and stay so close to an operating mine. East Gippsland Shire Council's "Lindenow & District Community Plan" did not foresee a mine in the area and Government needs to recognise the pre-existing residential and agricultural land use.

The mining proponent, Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd, has stated that there are radioactive substances being mined including rare-earths. The full analysis of the ore body has not been disclosed and I cannot trust the EES as it has not been stated what the laboratory was asked to analyse. While these substances remain below ground level and undisturbed they do not pose a health risk. It will be the mining (excavation/crushing) where dust is generated dispersing dangerous elements into the environment and being a cancer survivor I am concerned of the real danger this dust can be to both human and animals and the food chain.

The prevailing winds are from the West which means that this dust will travel far and wide including over my property contaminating my water supply as well as breathing it in on a daily basis. I truly do not believe the proponent can successfully suppress this dangerous dust on a continual 24hr 7 day a week basis and I request that the Panel ensure that this information is fully disclosed and closely examined and the Panel have a duty of care not to add cancer risks which would be a huge burden on the community.

Many families live, farm and work in close proximity to where the mine is proposed and the risk of lung borne diseases by breathing in very small ("respirable") crystalline silica particles, causing multiple diseases, including silicosis, an incurable lung disease that leads to disability and death. Respirable crystalline silica also causes lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and kidney disease. The dust will travel and settle not only on the local area but also over Bairnsdale and the surrounding towns. The possible costs and impact on our local health system over the following decades (due to adults and children being affected) will be huge. I believe it is irresponsible for the Government to put our Community at risk.

The Lindenow valley has a huge billion dollar vegetable growing/processing industry employing many more people than the proposed mine will. Plus it has the benefit of creating more jobs and employment in the local area including at Vegco (a large vegetable processing plant in Bairnsdale)

and also via the various distribution companies who transport our currently pristine vegetables to markets in Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney etc. This wonderful valley is located only 500m downwind from the proposed mine with most of the vegetables grown above ground, so again this is an area of high risk contamination from the mine's dust. The impact of contaminated vegetables puts at risk the shutting down of this multi-million dollar industry with big job and financial losses for our region.

Water is another major issue. The irrigation water for the Lindenow valley growers come from the Mitchell River. The location of the proposed mine is in very close proximity to this river which feeds into the Gippsland Lakes system exposing this whole system to contamination which will impact not only the crops but fishing and agriculture and this important Ramsar listed wetland.

The mine will also affect the Providence Ponds and Perry river. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority has even posted on their website (<https://www.wgcma.vic.gov.au/our-region/projects/protecting-our-ponds>) why they are so important:

Why are they important?

Chain of Ponds systems were once common across South-eastern Australia but are now very rare.

- No fully intact Chain of Ponds systems are known to currently exist as post-European changes in land use have resulted in a loss or modification of these waterways.
- The Providence Ponds and Perry River catchment is unique as it contains sections of intact ponds, as well as ponds that are recovering from erosion.
- The catchment and its ponds are home to many threatened plant and animal species such as Dwarf Galaxias, Pygmy Perch, Green and Golden Bell Frog, Gaping Leek-orchid and Prostate Cone-bush

There will be a tailings dam of 90 hectares in size containing mine tailings waste and flocculants which on the safety data sheets state about being harmful to aquatic life. This will be located on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell rivers and there is a stated risk of leaching from the dam. The danger is, if there is a 1 in a 100 year flood, then tailings waste could be released into the creeks and rivers harming the aquatic life plus the aquifers. The EES does not provide any details for the dam construction which questions how it can be stated in the EES that the risk is low.

Also the Woodglen Reservoir where the domestic and commercial water is stored for the Shire is located only 3.5kms downwind from the mine - again contamination risks.

The mine will require 3 billion litres of water (3GL) annually for up to 15 years (proposed maximum life of the mine) for processing and dust suppression. What is unknown is the impact this will have on the aquifers and local bores as the proponent plans to pull this water from the Mitchell river and the aquifer. If access to this water was provided to the horticulture industry then possibly 3 times more jobs would be created than this proposed mine.

Flora and fauna species are threatened by this mine with 13 sq kms being cleared for mining. This means over 700 mature trees will be removed which provide habitat for various animals. The EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area and so the full ramification is unknown. This could mean more loss than what has been reported in the EES. Offsets cannot address this loss.

It has been seen before where full rehabilitation does not happen - example is Douglas mine at Balmoral in Western Victoria. Rehabilitation bonds have been shown to be grossly inadequate to

cover the costs when the mine operators just walk away. The risks of this happening here is too great to ignore if the mine operators go into 'care and maintenance' with the tailings dam plus 19 dams on various gullies/creeks being abandoned.

I believe it is unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of private land to be used by the mine for infrastructure which is located outside the mining project boundary for:- water pipelines, bore pumps, bore fields, road works, new powerlines, easements, rail siding and vegetation removal. This all should be part of the mine project boundary area. Also why is this not a matter for the East Gippsland Shire Council to determine (Draft Planning Scheme Amendment).

I believe this proposed mine should not go ahead as the possible risks and damage to the environment and health of the area/population is too great.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Beverly Cree