

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 288

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**Request to be heard?:** Yes

**Full Name:** Jeanette Vola Wagner

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** My\_EES\_submissi

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** EES submission uploaded below

I am writing this submission about the EES for the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine project which I strongly oppose for reasons outlined below.

I have lived in this region for more than 45 years and feel I have been privileged to live in such a beautiful region. I live in Paynesville very close to the Gippsland Lakes (one of the largest freshwater lakes systems in the southern hemisphere), where we used to holiday (from Melbourne) when I was a child, and go swimming in the pristine waters of the Lakes when you could see the bottom of the Lake anywhere you went. That is not possible now unfortunately, due to contamination from many mines such as the Latrobe Valley and the Benambra mine, which the government has allowed to reopen and is currently leaking 86,000 litres daily of contaminated water into the Tambo River which then flows into the Gippsland Lakes, as well as many other issues that all need to be addressed. We certainly DO NOT need anything that is going to contaminate the Lakes even further! There will be a tailings dam 90 hectares in size, that's nearly 1 square km. It will contain mine tailings waste and flocculants (chemicals used to treat the tailings) which have warnings on safety data sheets about being harmful to aquatic life.

Located on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell Rivers there is a stated risk of leaching from the dam. If there is a 1 in 100-year flood, tailings waste & flocculants could be released into the creeks/streams, harming aquatic life and aquifers. The risks are considerable and foreseeable given the many examples of dam failures (Benambra example) so the risk of failure can't be low. There are no details in the EES for the dam's construction so how can the risk of failure be low!

I have also worked in this region for more than 45 years, firstly partnering in a hairdressing salon, then in retail fashion, and currently in finance so I do know what issues affect the business regions. A large percentage of this region survives on the Agricultural and food Industry and the Tourism Industry both of which would be affected SEVERELY if this mine is allowed to proceed with the government missing out on lots of taxation payments because many businesses would be forced to close, especially when we have already been affected by the Fires and presently COVID-19 all in one year! Not to mention the local rates that will no longer be paid for the properties that will be taken over by the mining company, because mining companies do not pay Shire rates leaving the ratepayers to make up the loss!

This mine is going to cover around 1675 hectares and be dug down 45 metres deep and be located within 360 metres of the Mitchell River which flows into the Gippsland Lakes and supplies the majority of the water for this region. With the winds we experience in this region, the dust from this mine would blow into the River and onto the Lindenow Valley Flats which is one of Victoria's largest vegetable growing areas. Some of the Growers in this area must meet quality assurance requirements for their fresh produce which could result in their produce being rejected if contamination is found. If you talk to people who have worked in similar mines or, live in areas close to mines such as this, they all say that it is impossible to contain the dust – no matter how much water they use!

Then there is the water that will be used – more than 3 billion litres of water annually! In a country that is one of the driest populated continents on the planet! Could this be why we have the Murray Darling Basin disaster?? Our underground water supply is NOT never

ending, nor are our rivers. But, have you considered that, if the farmers on the Lindenow Flats were allocated another 3 billion litres of water per annum they could employ 600 more people. Mineral Sands mines generally employ 180-190 for the first year or so which then drops down to somewhere between 20 and 50!

The mining proponent, Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd, has acknowledged there are radioactive substances being mined including rare-earths. Below ground level and undisturbed these substances do not pose a health risk. It is when they are excavated and crushed that dust is generated, dispersing these materials into the environment; which poses a health risk. Dust travels far, so contamination and health risks are real concerns. The Panel has a duty of care not to add to the cancer burden of the community. The mine is too close to where many families live, farm and work. There are many health risks such as lung disease from respirable silica. It would be irresponsible for the Government to put the community at risk. The number of houses near the mine has been under-reported. There are 81 homes and 1 school so 82 sensitive receptors. Kalbar said there were 49 sensitive receptors and didn't identify the school. These figures are within 3km of the mine project boundary.

Full rehabilitation rarely happens. Will progressive rehabilitation actually occur (example is Douglas mine at Balmoral in Western Victoria where a toxic waste dump was left behind)? The risks of no rehabilitation are high if the mine goes into 'care & maintenance' with the tailings dam and 19 dams on gullies/creeks being abandoned. Rehabilitation bonds have been shown to be grossly inadequate to cover costs.

It is unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of private land to be used by the mine for infrastructure that is located outside the mining project boundary for: water pipelines, bore pumps, bore field, roadworks, new power lines, easements, rail siding and vegetation removal. Why wasn't this part of the mine project area? Why isn't this a matter for the EG Shire Council to determine?

With 13 square kms of land being mined a lot of trees and habitat will be removed including over 700 large mature trees. Flora and fauna species are threatened. EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area to know the full ramifications of what is at risk. This could mean more loss than reported in the EES. The landscape of the area will never be replaced; offsets cannot address this loss.

I am not against mining but this location is way too close to our waterways and one of the largest vegetable growing areas in the State. Mineral sands are mostly used for ceramics and paint tinting and a miniscule amount for mobile phones and computers. So, the question is what is more important – ceramics, mobile phones etc or Food??

If some of the decision makers came up here for a tour of the minesite, I'm sure they would agree with the majority of our community. Please make the effort.

Sincerely and Passionately,

Jeanette Wagner

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