

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

90

Request to be heard?: No

Full Name: Meralin Jeannette Fawcus

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Glenaladale_Mine

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee Members,

I am writing this submission about the EES for the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine project and wish to express my concerns about a mine of this nature being so close to:

1. Pre-existing residential and organically certified agricultural land use.
2. The Mitchell and Perry Rivers.
3. Bairnsdale and the Shire's Water Supply – The Woodglen Reservoir, only 3.5kms downwind from the mine.

I live in Metung and chose to retire here in 2012 because of the environment, the waterways and rivers which feed into the Gippsland Lakes and the clean, green feel to Bairnsdale and surrounding areas, which remain so because of the permanent ban on fracking.

When I first heard about the mine in early 2019 I was troubled and decided to investigate further.

I attended the council meetings at which indigenous, horticultural and tourism groups and members of the community presented their concerns. The more I learned, the more I was horrified that the council would even consider approval of a mine in such close proximity to Bairnsdale, and in the vicinity of such a hugely important agricultural region, (500m downwind from the mine) which supplies certified organic vegetables to this region and Melbourne. The area is a pre-existing food bowl for Victoria and should be treated with care and respect.

Why would you want to jeopardize this organically certified industry with potentially contaminating airborne dust.

This region is still struggling with drought, as is most of Australia, and with water availability in the future becoming a very real problem, why would you want to jeopardize our drinking water source, which is only 3.5kms from the mine?

It makes no sense to me that the horticultural producers of the multi-million dollar industry have just been on Stage 11 water restrictions, and are not allowed to take any more water from the river, yet a mining company can have priority access to billions of litres of water for processing and dust suppression for the next 15 to 20 years. What a waste.

And what happens if our water supply at the Woodglen Reservoir runs out or is polluted because of mine processes?

Where will the population of Bairnsdale and the whole Shire get their drinking water from then?

It also makes no sense to me that the mine will produce "hundreds of jobs", when in fact jobs in the agricultural and tourism sectors in the region already number in the thousands. Why replace one with the other? There would be 3 times more jobs in the vegetable industry if the growers were allowed the 3GL of water allocation proposed for the mine.

It is estimated that 40 B Double trucks a day, loaded with 72 tonnes of toxic sand will be driving non-stop, 500m downwind from the mine for the next 15 to 20 years. Why would you risk the organic certification of the vegetable growers with dust contamination?

The contamination from dust and run-off of potentially toxic chemicals, could also damage the waterways, and have serious impact on the internationally significant and Ramsar protected Gippsland Lakes Wetlands.

What about the noise pollution?

The tailings dam will be 90 hectares (nearly 1 square km) with the height of the walls 20m.

This proposed tailings dam sits in close proximity to the Perry River catchment area and poses contamination risks to the waterways and aquifers, with tailings waste and flocculants which have warnings on safety data sheets about being harmful to aquatic life. How is this safeguarding our main tourism drawcard, the rivers and the Gippsland Lakes? What about our recreational fishing and boating tourism? The risks are considerable and foreseeable given the many examples of dam failures (Benambra example) so the risk of failure can't be low. In the EES there is no detail for the dam's construction, so how can the risk of failure be low?

Kalbar plan to remove 700 mature trees to make way for their mine. Yet locals have been fined for removing trees from verges and properties without consulting the council. And so they should be fined.

Why should the mine company be exempt from council regulations concerning native vegetation?

The landscape of the area will never be replaced. With 13 square kms being mined, this important habitat for bird and wildlife will be lost forever. Owls and other bird species rely on mature tree hollows to make their homes. In light of the huge areas of lost habitat for birds and wildlife during the recent devastating fires in our locality within East Gippsland, we can't lose any more large areas of old habitat, especially when it is for purely commercial gains, profiting few.

EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area to know the full ramifications of what is at risk. This could mean more loss of flora and fauna than reported in the EES.

Given the appalling history of the other 150 mines in Australia, eg. The mine at Benambra and the Douglas mine at Balmoral in Western Victoria, all of which started out with "foolproof" rehabilitation plans for the future (restoration of soil back to the original condition, secure tailings dams etc) we can have little faith that the reassurances we are hearing from the mine investors and spokespersons, will be carried out. Only one mine has achieved a successful rehabilitation outcome. ONE MINE IN 150.

Once contamination occurs, history has proven it will be impossible to undo environmental damage and the soil can never be regenerated after toxic poisoning. There is potential at a later date for the present investors (94% Dutch owned so far) to on sell to other overseas investors, which could potentially see them walk away from their restoration and rehabilitation commitments. History has shown this has happened with other mines. Rehabilitation bonds have been shown to be grossly inadequate to cover costs, leaving taxpayers to pick up the tab for mining companies irresponsible behaviour.

The potential impacts of this mine are irreversible.

Why has the East Gippsland Shire Council permitted 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? Again, why isn't this a matter for the East Gippsland Shire Council to determine?

I would not be writing this submission to you if the proposed Mineral Sands Mine at Glenaladale was in another location, far away from townships, waterways, and the tourism drawcard of the lake complexes. But the location, size, scale and 15 to 20 year timeframe of this proposed mine is ludicrous located so close to Bairnsdale.

I sincerely hope that you will support the people of this region who have voiced their concerns against such a potentially damaging project which will profit only a few and be detrimental to so many.

I'd like to thank the Panel Members for the opportunity to make this submission.

Regards,

Meralin Fawcus