

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

390

Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Domenic Galati

Organisation: Rosengal

Affected property: [REDACTED] Hillside Victoria 3875

Attachment 1: Rosengal_submiss

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: Please see the attached

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

We strongly reject the EES report and we are totally opposed to the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands and Rare Earth Mine project.

We are one of the twelve horticulture businesses that will be directly impacted by the proposed mineral sands mine project.

When RMCG conducted the interviews with farmers we did not have adequate information provided to us as to properly understand the proposed mine. Therefore, we do not accept the RMCG report as it is flawed.

Our family has been farming and growing vegetables in the Lindenow Valley since 1984. I myself have worked on our family run business since I was nine years old. My parents have worked tirelessly over the years to create well-recognised and high quality 'fresh clean green' vegetables that are widely sourced.

Over this time, we have also started a business in the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market located in Epping Victoria (now known as Melbourne Market Epping) and has become and continues to be leaders in 'fresh clean green' produce from the Lindenow Valley and districts.

Consumers and retail outlets continually request our fresh produce and look for our specific brand name and product labels of our fresh vegetables.

We have customers who are extremely specific and only request our produce as they know where it is grown and know it is of the highest quality. They request our label because we have ensured our produce is fresh clean and green.

Consumers are highly aware of where our produce is grown, and they like to support vegetables grown in our specific region.

We believe our business will be directly impacted by the proposed mine. If the mine were to go ahead it will have a negative effect on our family, our business, our workers and the East Gippsland community.

We are the major food bowl of Victoria.

The proposed mine has the potential to decimate the whole horticultural industry as well as the landscape of East Gippsland, a place of which we have come to know of as our home.

Our population is increasing but our food bowls are shrinking. The impact on consumers and farmers will be immense, we must say **NO** to this mine proposal.

We do not understand how the local government would support overseas investment at a cost to the local economy, which is around \$150M per year from the Lindenow Valley Food Bowl. It seems local governments are supporting foreign interest and investment over local rate payers and voters.

We would have thought this Mineral Sands and Rare Earths project would have been rejected at the first stage as it is illogical to place a mineral sands and rare earth mine next door to Victoria's major food bowl and many vegetable growing business', and only 350 metres away from East Gippsland's main water source, the Mitchell River. This water source is the only continuous fresh flowing water which feeds into the Gippsland Lakes system.

Part of this system is the Mitchell River, which farmers use to irrigate their crops, water for their livestock and is also used for suppling households in the wider community and is used for their drinking water.

Our core product of our business is hand-picked green beans. Over the last four summers we have experienced droughts. We have had to watch crops die because of lack of water available from the Mitchell River.

This has caused immense pain: physically, emotionally, mentally and financially...so much so that we have had to rethink the way we farm, and it has severely reduced our productivity.

If the three gigalitres of water was available for the farmers to purchase, we would still be at full capacity producing vegetables today ensuring we meet the demands of our customers and increase our local workforce.

Nearly every summer we have grown vegetables, we have had to endure water restrictions imposed on us during summer. We cannot see how Kalbar can operate a mineral sands and rare earth mine with three gigs of water without impacting the farmers.

If we had more river water made available to farmers, we could maintain and increase our farming business which in turn will increase employment of local people and economic benefits for the shire.

We decided not to grow vegetable crops for the 2020 summer due to drought and lack of water security, we instead grew fodder crops. Water security is already a problem for irrigation licence holders along the Mitchell River and Bore Licence holders.

Our vegetables are grown to the highest standard. We have quality assurance accreditation and have a clean green status amongst wholesalers and exporters on the East Coast of Australia.

We do Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) testing on our vegetables yearly, soil testing yearly, water testing yearly and will be doing base line testing from now on.

The risks from dust and potential contamination from Kalbar's proposed mine would severely impact on our business and reputation, let alone if families and children were to consume vegetables that have toxic dust embedded in them or our staff breathing in the toxic dust.

Once the mineral sands have been brought to the surface, the dust which is likely to be radioactive and can cause cancer will be exposed. Once these particles are made airborne by the strong winds that frequent the Lindenow Valley, this contaminated dust will pollute the very air we breathe. It will be inhaled and digested by human beings and animals in the Lindenow Valley Food Bowland all-over East Gippsland, possibly Australia wide.

Our core products are hand-picked green beans, broccoli, sweet corn and baby broccoli (broccolini).

At different times throughout the year, we also grow cauliflower, broccoli rabe, peas, snow peas and sugar snap. In previous years we have also experimented with zucchini, squash, zucchini flowers, capsicum, eggplant, hot chillies, silverbeet, celery and leeks.

All the above-mentioned products have been grown on our family farming land for many years, and because of our environment we are **not limited** to what we can grow.

Amongst these products, some vegetables are packed straight from paddock to wholesalers without the need to rinse (and is highly recommended not to irrigate before harvesting), and then sent throughout Australia for distribution.

All our products are labelled as it is a requirement for our quality assurance, and we are accountable for our produce being of the highest quality.

Contaminated dust particles are one of our main concerns. If the contaminated dust particles were to become embedded into our produce, for example, cauliflower and broccoli heads are made up of many tiny florets, where dust can be captured, and therefore contaminate the vegetable.

Peas, sugar snap, snow peas, cauliflower, sweet corn, eggplant, capsicum and hot chillies are **NOT** washed before packaging.

Beans, baby broccoli, broccoli, broccoli rabe, zucchini, squash, silverbeet, celery and leeks are all washed before packaging.

Our water source is the Mitchell River. Our production from seed to market requires clean fresh water from this source. Irrigation of crops and the washing of the produce and machinery could be affected by Kalbar's mineral sands mine contaminants in our water and

would affect our “clean green status”. Do we now need to find exuberant amounts of money to set up water treatment plants? This is outrageous!

Another concern is that we use river water for our snowflake ice maker machine to pack broccoli and baby broccoli for transport. We wash our produce with water directly pumped from the Mitchell River.

Both procedures could be contaminated thru dust particles from Kalbar’s proposed mine.

As we have mentioned previously, there is a lack of water available to farmers that heightened during droughts and restrictions.

With the proposed mine and what Kalbar intends to do; like requiring 3 gigs of water annually and damming the run-off from hills and creeks is downright outrageous.

Farmers have fought for many years to gain access to winter-fill licences and have been told there is none available.... Not to mention if Kalbar stops run-off water reaching the Mitchell River, it would be already at a lower flow rate before our summer season begins.

Drilling for water and accessing the shallow aquifers will be detrimental to the flow, accessibility, availability and the quality of water.

To quote what was said by Kalbar in the EES “We propose to **destroy** the shallow aquifer which may impact on stock and domestic bores”.

They are accepting responsibility for damaging a natural water source and have no intention of being able to repair such damage. Not to mention the run-off water from the site being full of carcinogenic toxic minerals that has the potential to end up in East Gippsland’s only water supply.

Potential problems that can arise when the water table decreases are things such as:

- *Salinity will increase leaving the quality of the water questionable.
- *Filters and jets becoming blocked with excessive mineral and dirt deposits.
- *Pump and flow rates becoming less effective.
- *Stock not being able to drink due to salinity levels.
- *Irrigation of the vegetables jeopardised because the water quality would be compromised.

We use this water supply for our stock. We also use this water supply for our domestic needs and is a vital part of our survival as a farming business. We use this water for our household living such as cooking, showering, washing, cleaning and drinking.

Where is our guarantee that this water source will be safe and will not contaminate us...?

We remember reading an article about the Victorian Government permanently banning fracking in this state, as to ensure it was protecting the agriculture of our state. We need to ban this mine site from where it has been proposed as to protect not only the environment but also the horticultural industry.

We would like to thank you for taking the time to read our perspective of this proposed Mineral Sands and Rare Earth mine in the Lindenow Valley. We hope that it resonates with you about just how big an impact such a mine would have, not only locally in East Gippsland, but also Australia wide.

We leave you with one thought...

“Does the Victorian and Australian Government want 15 years of a toxic Mineral Sands Mine or a LIFETIME of multigenerational fresh clean green food source to feed the nation?”

Sincerely,

Domenic Galati

Rosina Galati