

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

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Request to be heard?: No - but please email me a copy of the
Timetable and any Directions

Full Name: Deborah Schmetzer

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Kalbar.pdf

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See Attached Submission

Dear Inquiry & Advisory Committee Members,

As an East Gippsland Resident for over 30 years, I am extremely concerned about the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sand Mine Project for many reasons and DO NOT think it should be approved. I discuss my concerns below:

Main Concern Regarding Water and Toxic Dust:

Radioactive waste and rare earth in the form of dust will be dispersed into the air and water, as the mine is very close, 500 metres downwind to residential and agricultural areas. In the EES, there was not transparency as to what ore constituents the lab analysed, and the possible dangers posed to the community which should be made public to concerned residents. The number of houses very close to the mine is more than what has been reported, and with dust able to travel far and wide, the whole community will be at risk.

I will make reference to the mineral sand mine operation in Mooball, NSW (many years prior) and the resulting cancer cluster and deaths to those living close to the mine. The cancer-causing toxic dust and associated lung diseases (15 years of dust dispersal!) pose a threat to our community through wind dispersion and water run-off onto residential land and water tanks, the Mitchell River and our vegetable/fruit growing food bowl. This is of great importance to the collective health of our community. The Government would be irresponsible to put our health in jeopardy in favour of approving a mine that is too close to human habitation,

To combat toxic dust dispersal, the proposal is that 3 BILLION litres of our precious water be used PER YEAR for 15 YEARS! With such water greedy needs this amount is unsustainable and I do not believe that the dust will be controlled. In times of drought and climate change, bush fires, the impacts on aquifers and our Mitchell River may be severely compromised and I repeat, the water quality as a result of this mine's operation can impact the health of our own lives, our plants and animals. This mine is a mere 500 metres downwind from local residents and our local food source.

Again, I stress the point that we need water to LIVE, more than we need a mineral sand mine that is foreign-owned and exploiting and contaminating our unique environment, the Gippsland Lakes and river systems for profit. Our health and well being is worth more than mine profits.

I am dubious also of the 90 hectare tailings dam and its negative impact on aquatic life, local residents and our vegetable/fruit food bowl. There are claims of low risks by the tailings dam, but the EES makes no mention, so how can the claim be backed up with confidence? I shop locally at businesses that strives to sell our locally produced fruit and vegetables, to support East Gippsland growers, as do most who care about the quality of our food. This to me is the most worrying aspect of Kalbar's project, the contamination of our food and water.

Mine Proposal Touts Jobs

Agriculture and tourism has been operating successfully for years in our region, why introduce a mine that could potentially put these pre-existing successful businesses in danger?

If the many agriculture businesses making up our food bowl were granted the amount of water that Kalbar is requiring, many more long term jobs could be offered, perhaps 2 to 3 times that which this mine would employ. These jobs would be long term, rather than the short term jobs by Kalbar, and without the environmental dangers, and not causing the extreme angst the community has towards this mine project. So the enticement of jobs by Kalbar is a moot point.

Environmental Effects Including Rehabilitation

The mine area requires removal of about 700 large trees which is of course, habitat for native wildlife their removal threatens our flora and fauna. I feel there has been negligence by the EES in not doing a complete survey as to the endangerment of which species and therefore is ignorant of the risks.

Promises of land rehabilitation resulting in even BETTER conditions than what was there before is just that, a promise that can be broken. There are so many instances of mining companies leaving the land degraded with toxicity remaining. I mention as an example the Douglas Mine at Balmoral where a toxic waste dump remained for the community to deal with as well as the Benambra mine where a total clean-up was 'guaranteed' and it didn't happen. This is all too common and there is enormous lack of trust by the community with good reason.

NOISE and TRAFFIC

Kalbar expects the community to put up with large trucks on our roads 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, being extremely noisy as well as putting pressure on road safety and degradation of the roads, not to mention the dust issue, with these vehicles churning up dust and travelling on our major roads.

Land Acquisition and the East Gippsland Shire Council's Role

Farmers should NOT lose control of their own land just because a mining venture that is foreign owned wants to claim that fertile land for pure profit, at the farmer's expense. As already discussed, the 'jobs, jobs, jobs' promise coming from Kalbar is far less than the number of long term jobs that could be created with the water usage required by the mineral sands mine AND will far benefit the community by providing fresh food instead of toxic dust laden produce.

It is bad enough for a family owning the land for generations to have it acquired for someone else's personal gain, but my concern is that this land is outside Kalbar's actual mine operations boundary, WHY???? This is unreasonable. This fertile productive land will be used for water pipelines, bore infrastructure, road works, easements, power lines and vegetation removal. My question is, since pre-existing recognition of residential and agricultural by the Shire Council, why has not the EG Shire Council been involved in determining the decision-making role of its ratepayers' land?

Tourism and Cultural Heritage

People from all over Australia and overseas come to this region because of the natural environment: lakes, rivers, fishing, camping, forests, wildlife and so on. Water

quality is of paramount importance to our river and lake systems for all those enjoying our region and the threat of diminished water quantities and water quality due to this mining operation will jeopardise a healthy tourist industry that so successfully exists. Tourist numbers and its trickle down effect would be diminished, as its been shown people do not want to see mining sites, just as they do not want to see native destruction such as logging coupes and nature replaced with mining infrastructure.

And since the project means digging down to 50 metres, there could be destruction of Aboriginal cultural sites, relics, etc, perhaps similar to the recent negative press regarding Rio Tinto. I feel we need to consider and show respect for our First Peoples cultural heritage before project approval.

In conclusion, the negative cons of this mineral sands mining project far outweighs the pros. The only good thing that can be said about the pros is short term jobs, nothing else, and this is correctly disputed by the fact that more long term jobs can be offered by the existing agricultural and tourism businesses. I strongly oppose this project by Kalbar.

I thank the committee members for the opportunity to express my sincere views on the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project by Kalbar.

Sincerely,

Deborah Schmetzer