

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

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**Request to be heard?:** Yes

**Full Name:** Cheryl Romanin

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** EES\_Fingerboards

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** see attached submission

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing this letter in response to the EES for the Fingerboards mineral sands mine project. I wish to express my strongest opposition to the mine in light of numerous negative impacts. I am appalled at the risks involved to the Bairnsdale and Lakes region.

I have been a permanent resident of this area for 15 years and spent regular holidays in the area for many years prior to that in an on-site van which I owned in Paynesville. I have connections to the area (Bairnsdale, Lindenow and Lakes Entrance) through my ancestors from the mid-1800s. My Great-Great-Great-Aunt, Flora Gregson, painted pictures of the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, paintings which are now held in the Latrobe Library, State Library of Victoria. Her paintings include scenes of Lindenow and the Lakes.

The proposed mine at Fingerboards poses an unprecedented threat to the Lindenow area and to the entire Lakes system, a Ramsar listed wetlands.

Radioactive substances, including rare-earths, will be brought to the surface and crushed, creating dust which poses an enormous hazard directly and indirectly to humans and the environment. I can't express how distressed and angry I am at the thought of the irrevocable long-term impacts that will ensue, all in the interests of short-term gain.

There has been incomplete disclosure of the analysis of the ore body. Why is this? We need complete disclosure to fully understand the risks involved. Could the panel please ensure that the full results are disclosed and closely examined.

The dust produced by the mining operations will travel through wind and water. The Mitchell and Perry Rivers feed into the Lakes system, a precious natural resource that is the basis of the region's tourism industry, quite apart from its environmental benefits. The immediate area 500m from the mine is home to a thriving vegetable industry on the Lindenow flats. The damage to that industry from contaminated dust would have an impact on many families, on employment opportunities and on the region's economy and health. We can't eat mineral sands!

The risks to health from the contamination arising from the mine are real and significant. Cancer is already a major health issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has major impacts on the economy and society. There are also health risks for lung disease from respirable silica. Apart from the human suffering caused and the burden of illness on the economy, there is also a potential negative impact on the region's status as a desirable place to live and work.

The proposed mine is too close to a residential and agricultural area. It will adversely affect local residents through 24/7 noise and activity at the mine, toxic dust arising from the mine and the subsequent stress and health effects. This is a totally unsuitable industry for an area which is renowned for its natural beauty and rural nature. The mine will impact an area of 13 sq km, destroying the natural environment, including over 700 large mature trees. With the problems caused by fires and climate change we must guard and preserve our environment. We are becoming more and more cognisant that even small changes have widespread impacts on flora and fauna. As the area has not been comprehensively surveyed

we are ignorant of the totality of potential losses. Why has a comprehensive survey not been effected?

The public has little faith in promises from mining companies to rehabilitate the areas that they destroy. History has shown that the consequences for the mining companies are inadequate when they walk away from the environmental destruction and toxic mess that they are responsible for. The Victorian Auditor-General's Office Report "Rehabilitating Mines" Tabled 5 August 2020 is a damning indictment of Mining Rehabilitation. Quite apart from the existing failure to enforce rehabilitation, the idea that rehabilitation can in any way recreate lost complex environmental structures is naïve and ludicrous.

I believe that the elephant in the room in the long list of negative impacts is the threat to water supply. Australia is a dry country and through climate change will become dryer. "From erratic rainfall to severe droughts, global warming is increasing competition for water around the world, with water-related conflicts on the rise." (World Economic Forum 07 Sep 2020). We can see the beginnings of this conflict in the arguments over the use of water from the Murray-Darling Basin.

The EES reports talk of degree of risk and of 100-year events. Risk is predicated on the known and foreseeable, however the watchword for the era we are entering is "unprecedented". We are seeing so-called 100-year events occur with an alarmingly increasing frequency. We only have to look at droughts, floods and bushfires to know that our past models cannot predict what is to come. Events are becoming progressively more severe and unpredictable. Our rainfall will be more and more erratic and it is vitally important that our water supplies be managed in a responsible and forward-looking manner. We need to do our utmost to protect our water sources, including rivers, streams and lakes and their catchment areas. No degree of risk is acceptable when talking about our water supply.

The proposed mine will negatively impact our precious water supplies:-

1. Through the risk of contamination of groundwater and surface water by contaminated dust, flocculant seepage and problems arising from the 90 hectare tailings dam. Why are there no specifications in the report for the construction of the tailings dam? It poses a real threat situated as it is situated above the Mitchell and Perry Rivers.
2. Through the appropriation of 3 billion litres of water annually for up to 15 years. This makes a mockery of applying water restrictions in this area. Why is this water not used to grow food? Covid has shown us the importance of becoming self-sufficient in food supplies.
3. Through disturbance of underlying groundwater. "Not only does depleting groundwater reserves affect a groundwater system, it can also have a detrimental effect on surface water and the environment. Groundwater is often hydraulically connected to creeks, rivers, wetlands and lakes such that any degradation in the quantity and quality of the groundwater will almost certainly damage the surrounding groundwater and surface water dependent environments."

[https://denr.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/272472/abcs-groundwater.pdf](https://denr.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/272472/abcs-groundwater.pdf)

The proposal to compulsorily acquire land outside the mine area boundary for the siting of mine infrastructure is totally unacceptable. Why was this not included in the mine project area and why is this not a matter for the East Gippsland Shire Council to determine?

I thank the Panel members for the opportunity to make this submission.

Cheryl Romanin