

**LRASH - Spoken Submission
Kalbar Mine - Fingerboards IAC
Thursday 20 May 2021 - 11:35am**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Lucy Rash. I am 31 years old and I grew up in Fernbank on a sheep property in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site where my parents still live, and that I will inherit. I am a qualified [REDACTED] teacher at [REDACTED], one of Australia's most respected and globally aware schools, and I come with a deep, academically-founded concern for this project's environmental impacts.

My students know that I'm here today. I spoke with them on Friday about the importance of standing up for what you believe in, and what is environmentally just. And I can assure you that I speak today with the voices of some incredibly astute young people behind me. I cannot stand for what is proposed, for as long as I continue to inspire young people to care for land in ways that profit-driven mining projects by Kalbar will not.

On Wednesday 2 December 2020, the ABC reported that East Gippsland Shire Council voted unanimously to oppose the mine. Councillors reported that - quote "The council's report shows that the EES has not demonstrated the potentially significant environmental and other impacts of the project can be acceptably managed, and therefore council has no choice but to oppose the project in our submission to the State Government." I back these claims.

Firstly, I am deeply concerned about Kalbar's proposed access to precious public natural resources such as the Mitchell River, the local catchment areas and the ancient aquifer under my family's farm. I am aware that Kalbar has expressed it will require up to 3 gigalitres of water per year to operate the mine. When this isn't available from the Mitchell River due to diminished flows or the dry periods that Lauren Woodward has already highlighted for us, then the mine will be able to access supplies from the aquifer. While aquifer supplies are not necessarily finite, they take many, many years to replenish. As a Geography specialist, I would like to remind the panel that depending on permeability, aquifers can regain water at a mere rate of less than 50 inches per century. That's not to mention the harmful carcinogens, silts and other chemicals that are bound to leak into such replenishing supplies. To believe this won't happen, or that farmers - like my family - will be able to trust the surrounding water supplies aren't contaminated, is to completely misunderstand the geographical process of water flows and storages, and the impact of human interventions in this

process. Bioaccumulation of heavy metals in soils, pastures, crops and stock is a known and common problem in contexts of persistent dust contamination. Kalbar has already acknowledged it can't eliminate all the dust. As Lauren Woodward has detailed before me, this risk is absolutely inevitable, and the precedents have been set. This is a huge and worrying gap in the EES.

I am also deeply concerned about Kalbar's ongoing amendments to its plans and the impact this will have on rehabilitation. I understand that the recently added centrifuges, for example, are estimated to bring an additional cost of \$100mil to this project. When rehabilitation is promised but not **transparently** factored in to such changes in scope, I am severely concerned that Kalbar will begin cutting corners in terms of its rehabilitation obligations. But regardless of what Kalbar promises to do, the truth is that once precious land is altered, it's altered forever. In December 2020, Rio Tinto was ordered by a special parliamentary enquiry to rebuild the 46,000 year-old First Nations cave system it blew up in May. While Rio Tinto pledged to - quote "change its practices", the traditional owners and local communities had to bear the un-repairable cost. Likewise, we see in Kalbar's testimonials, that rehabilitation is an empty word without a clear plan or guarantee. But when it comes down to it, is true rehabilitation even possible? Not for one of Australia's foremost farming districts. And certainly not for age-old cultural heritage sites, many of which may be uncovered in the development area, as the Gunaikunai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation has already stated. Not for the 78+ already rare, threatened, national-listed and/or native flora and fauna species recorded in the area. And not for the one-thousand, 675 hectares of land plus 400+ mature shade and habitat trees that will never be replaced. Kalbar can't guarantee detailed rehabilitation plans, because it's just not possible. How Kalbar can claim that key questions around this are addressed "after approval" is astounding. This is unacceptable.

Finally, when a need for profit outweighs a need to protect the resources that maintain an entire community's livelihood - my family's, the Woodwards, the Alexanders and so many others - we have an unsurpassable issue. It is inevitable to have an emotionally charged reaction to this issue when my family has been connected to the land for so many generations - but the emotion of this situation is also backed by hard evidence, precedents, and grave concerns for Kalbar's lack of transparency and planning.

This is why I believe this deeply problematic project should not proceed.

Thank you.