

Good morning IAC committee members.

I want to start with an introduction of myself, my family and how we came to be vegetable growers in Lindenow. My great grandfather made the voyage from Denmark to Australia at 17 years old in 1913 and found himself in Maffra before purchasing land and settling in Hillside. He chose Australia because it was seen as the land of opportunity.

We are now fourth generation farmers in our 100th year of continuous cropping. I work alongside my father and brothers and we have kids that love being on the farm. The impact on the livelihood of our families should things go wrong will be immense.

Certified organic since the year 2000 we grow celery, beetroot, broccoli, cabbage, leek and carrots for domestic markets, supermarkets and export on 300 acres. Organic certification isn't handed out; it is earned by demonstrating commitment to the National Organic Standard over many years. We just can't afford to have the threat of a mineral sand mine destroy what we have created. Our peak body Australian Organic share our contention. They have provided their concerned members with a letter of support which was attached to my submission to the EES.

We employ 50 people in our peak season which runs for 6 months.

As stated in my submission to the EES, we explicitly oppose the creation and operation of a mineral sands mine at The Fingerboards, Glenaladale and wish to express our disappointment in the dismissive nature of the Environmental Effects Statement when assessing and rating the impacts of potential risks to the Horticulture Industry.

This land was made for farming.

Some of the panel have seen the area and would appreciate how unique the landscape is. The top soil we grow in is 30 feet deep and was formed over millions of years. The east to west orientation of the valley enables cooling air flow to pass through the valley, assisting the control of bacterial and fungal diseases and creating a temperate climate that enables us to produce most vegetables types for 12 months of the year. Our temperate climate gives us an incredible advantage over other growing areas.

There are no examples of mineral sand mining occurring so close to intensive horticultural operations in Australia. Claims of co-existence being possible between horticulture and open cut mineral sand mining are far-fetched. There are absolutely no comparable examples of a mineral sand mine operating on a plateau above an 18km long valley of vegetables!

Although it was stated that an 'interview with a local consultant from the Busselton region confirmed that local vegetable producers have not experienced any issues due to the vicinity of the sand mine, no evidence was provided to substantiate this claim (RMCG, 2020; p 59).

Darren Billingsley presented to the IAC and reported "Conservatively, dust deposition from the Fingerboards could alter the radioactive content of the soil by 1%". Why should this be okay? Why

should it be altered at all? To alter soil by 1% is considerable, when we are chasing improvements of much smaller units in other elements of fertility and soil health.

Wind currently blows typical dust around the region. These dusts are very different to the dust that will be mined from great depths. For the past 6 years Kalbar have failed to reveal exactly what they'll be ripping from approximately 40 metres below the ground. How do we know what we're up against when it really blows? What can we possibly tell our employees what they're breathing when we have an obligation to provide a safe work environment?

If contamination of our vegetables leads to organic de-certification our business will be destroyed. Who can I hold responsible? A standard for dust deposition on vegetables does not exist.

Considering horticulture is the industry likely to be most impacted by the project, one must ask why there were no base line studies undertaken to assess the effect that each element in the ore in their purity have on vegetables. This clearly demonstrates contempt for our vital industry and one must ask what Kalbar's reasoning is for such a short falling.

They have also had massive failures in air quality monitoring. Why, when there were failures in equipment over a period of time when significant wind events occurred, was further testing not undertaken?

Tomato spray drift story.

We, the growers are the experts in this area. The sheer volume of dust generated from the fingerboards and further west of the Lindenow flats is mind blowing, and no form of dust mitigation on site including water suppression or physical barriers will do anything! Historic wind data shows prevailing westerly winds sweeping across Glenaladale. The project location is just so inappropriate.

## Water

Water is the key to all our businesses down here. We're always looking for more water security.

If we had more water, we would grow more crops. Has anyone considered the expansion of our industry when looking at total water availability in this area.

We use water from the Mitchell River and bores.

Restrictions

Salinity in bore

Underground aquifer levels trending down. More water being extracted to feed a mine will be extremely damaging to the aquifers.

We know aquifers cannot be repaired once damaged. If contamination were to occur, who would be held responsible? Kalbar have no mining experience, how can we rely on them to get it right? Attempts to re-charge aquifers in Woodglen, right next to Glenaladale have failed in the past.

Is the estimated water requirement for the mine what they will ACTUALLY need, or will that change as mining occurs?

For a mine to require 3 billion litres of water just to suppress dust screams to me how inappropriate this mine is and highlights the waste of such an important resource.

What will happen if we have a severe drought and winter fill flow rates aren't triggered?

### **Doris Blaesing's presentation**

This report containing 17 pages of mostly pictures presented to the IAC leaves a lot to be desired. She has shown a comprehensive lack of understanding of our area and despite having years of experience in horticulture, has made several poor assumptions.

I struggle to comprehend how our horticultural businesses have been so financially undervalued, as a major long term employer and as preservers of the land. Considering the proposed project is adjacent to our thriving industry it is appalling how little importance the potential impacts to our industry have been given. To have our industry valued at \$62M is a sucker punch. Just one of the businesses here would be turning that sort of coin over. I think it would be fair and reasonable to expect a more accurate set of figures rather than rely on 2016 data?

Doris first visited the proposed mining site on the 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021, yet she was responsible for compiling the summary report that our horticulture group was given in 2018. RMCG said during the interviews with growers that we would get the full report, yet later deciding that this wouldn't be the case. We were only given this report by advocating to the VFF.

It is worth noting that 9/12 of horticultural businesses in the valley oppose this project and contributed to the horticulture chapter, chapter 7 in Mine Free Glenaladale's submission number 813 to the EES.

Page 7 of Doris' slideshow illustrates total area used for horticulture in the Lindenow valley. Remarkably, large parcels of horticultural land have been omitted. Instead of relying on inaccurate data sources, it would be much more effective to visit the dozen horticultural businesses in the area and mark their farmland on a map. How important are we, and how much effort did RMCG REALLY want to put into this report? How would it REALLY look of the figures on turnover and growing area were accurate?

Disappointingly, key concerns were omitted in Doris' presentation to the IAC such as water run-off quality, increased traffic, road safety and impacts of climate change.

Doris Blaesing claims on page 16 of her slide show presentation that produce grown in East Gippsland is unidentifiable to its origin once it leaves the area. If this were the case then why would she include an image of baby broccoli grown by local grower Bulmer Farms with a clear tag showing their business name and details? Would a google search not reveal where it was grown?

Other images on page 16 also show branding with photos of growers and their business names.

Under the National Organic Standard, labelling on produce packed for wholesale and retail sale must display a certification logo and number alike, and a search of this certification number on [aco.net.au](http://aco.net.au) will show who grew and packed that exact produce when certified with Australian Certified Organic. The same applies for other Organic certification bodies.

One cannot simply take the word of RMCG that hydro cooling vegetables will remove traces of dust from our vegetables. It is well known that hydro coolers are designed to cool produce by pumping chilled water up and gravity feeding it over vegetables. This is far from a wash.

Doris also claims river water is not suitable for post-harvest vegetable treatments such as washing and ice making. It is well known that as long as water is treated to be a potable standard, it is acceptable.

The Lindenow valley has been misrepresented and underestimated in this report.

- Statement that summer broccoli is only grown in Tasmania because it is too hot in Lindenow. Summer is the peak growing time for broccoli here, it is a staple in the Lindenow valley and has been for decades.
- The suggestion that dust can be controlled by physical barriers. Dust comes from above and will settle as it falls.
- Dust mitigation measures are already being practiced, but the dust on our farms is very different to that of a mineral sands mine.
- Rain, overhead irrigation and post harvest washing and sanitation can remove dust from all sources. Vegetables like celery, leek, broccoli and cauliflower are not exposed to a wash that will remove any dust from within the harvestable part of the plant.

End

One needs to consider how long farmers have worked this land before today, and how long they will continue to do so for generations to come. Now compare this to the aggressive and short term impactful and irreversible damaging operations of that of an open cut mineral sands mine.

Horticulture and agriculture more generally feed you all before me and are the backbone and cultural identity of our beautiful region. Please don't let the benefit to millions fall to the promises of a few years of short term dollars.

I would now like to read the letter of support from Australian Organic because I believe it is an important document.