

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

436

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

Full Name: Rachael Bartlett

Organisation:

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Submission-enviro

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached submission.

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am a resident of Bairnsdale and strongly oppose the proposed Fingerboards mineral sands mine project. This project cannot go ahead. It will be of serious detriment to the health of the environment, on which our community's health and wellbeing depends. This mine is yet another consciously applied immoral environmental disaster, putting money for big business before the availability of food, water and clean air for local communities. The mental health impacts on our community will be significant, as it is painful to watch the environment on which we depend, both wild and agricultural, be destroyed for something so many of us strongly oppose. To be honest, I don't hold out much hope of the right thing being done, but maybe this time it will. That is, the project will not go ahead. I have to write this letter to you to at least try, as it is so important.

I'm sure you don't really need me to explain to you the negative impacts the mine will have but there are dot points below which you will have seen before. Please don't be numbed by the repetition, but rather take on board how many of us are concerned. I own a house in Bairnsdale and have lived here for a year. I have many friends in the area, including in Lindenow. I have been awed by the beauty of the local area, the strength of the local community, and availability of local food and produce. All these things are inherently linked.

- The mining proponent Kalbar Operations Pty Ltd has acknowledged there are radioactive substances being mined including rare-earths. Below ground level and undisturbed, these substances do not pose a health risk. When they are excavated and crushed that dust is generated, dispersing these materials into the environment; this poses a health risk. We will no longer have confidence in the safety of local food and water.
- The full analysis of the ore body hasn't been disclosed. I absolutely do not trust the information in the EES because we don't know what the laboratory was asked to analyse. What are the real dangers to human and animal health?

I ask the Panel to ensure this information is fully disclosed and closely examined because of the risks.

- Dust travels far, so contamination and health risks are real concerns.

The Panel they have a duty of care not to add to the cancer burden of the community.

- The mine is too close to where many friends live, farm and work, and the number of houses near the mine have been under-reported. I am deeply concerned about health risks such as lung disease from respirable silica. It is careless and irresponsible for the Government to put my community at risk.
- Council's 'Lindenow & District Community Plan' did not foresee a mine in that area. Government needs to recognise the pre-existing residential and agricultural land use. Noise from a mine operating 24 hours a day 7 days a week will be untenable and very stressful. You do not get to decide that the noise levels won't be a problem. It is the locals who will be impacted and they are the only ones who can decide this.

We did not purchase land in the area knowing that a mine would be developed and the impacts on land value and use are unacceptable.

- We will lose tourism dollars as people won't want to see dust and a dirty big hole in the ground. People come for the food, the views and the community. The mine undermines what this area and community is all about.
- The vegetable industry in the Lindenow Valley is only 500m **downwind** from the mine with most of the vegetables grown above ground, so dust from the mine is a high risk. I don't want to eat contaminated vegetables or see the industry being shut down resulting in big job and financial losses for our region. I am astonished that this mine has even been considered given the area is a food bowl.
- Water to irrigate the crops comes from the Mitchell River. The mine is on the other side of the river on top of a plateau. There are risks of the river being contaminated, impacting on the crops, fishing, agriculture, the health of the rivers and the Gippsland Lakes (an important Ramsar-listed wetland).
- Unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are stated as being highly likely to be present and will be impacted. Given the massive excavation down to 45m, it will be impossible to avoid destruction of artefacts and heritage. This is unacceptable. Their mitigation measures will not avoid the obliteration of cultural heritage.
- There will be a tailings dam 90 hectares in size, that's nearly 1 square km. It will contain mine tailings waste and flocculants (chemicals used to treat the tailings) which have warnings on safety data sheets about being harmful to aquatic life. Located on high ground above both the Perry and Mitchell Rivers there is a stated risk of leaching from the dam. If there is a 1 in 100-year flood, tailings waste & flocculants could be released into the creeks/rivers, harming aquatic life and aquifers. The risks are considerable and foreseeable given the many examples of dam failures (e.g. Benambra) so the risk of failure is not low.

There are no details in the EES for the dam's construction so how can the risk of failure be low!

- Over 3 billion litres of water (3GL) is required by the mine annually for up to 15 years (the maximum life of the mine) for processing and to control dust. This shows how big a problem dust is. What will the impact of this be on bores, aquifers and the Mitchell River? According to irrigation data, if the 3GL of water was redirected to the horticulture industry, 3 times more jobs could be created than proposed by the mine.
- The Woodglen Reservoir where domestic and commercial water is stored for the whole Shire is 3.5kms downwind from the mine. What are the contamination risks? (Those on tank water living near the mine are also at risk of water contamination).
- With 13 square kms of land being mined a lot of trees and habitat will be removed including over 700 large mature trees. Flora and fauna species are threatened. EES technical studies have not comprehensively surveyed the area to know the full ramifications of what is at risk. This could mean more loss than reported in the EES. The landscape of the area will never be replaced; offsets can't address this loss.
- Full rehabilitation rarely happens. Will progressive rehabilitation actually occur (e.g. at Douglas mine at Balmoral in Western Victoria, a toxic waste dump was left behind)? The risks of no rehabilitation are high if the mine goes into 'care & maintenance' with the tailings dam and 19 dams on gullies/creeks being abandoned. Rehabilitation bonds have been shown to be grossly inadequate to cover costs.

You can never rehabilitate what you have destroyed. This is Kalbar's legacy to future generations in Gippsland. Another short-sighted, money-making

monstrosity that destroys the local community mentally , financially, and physically.

- It is unacceptable to allow compulsory acquisition of private land to be used by the mine for infrastructure that is located outside the mining project boundary for: water pipelines, bore pumps, bore field, roadworks, new powerlines, easements, rail siding and vegetation removal.

Why wasn't this part of the mine project area? Why isn't this a matter for the EG Shire Council to determine?

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I am truly scared for the future of my community and want desperately for us to be heard and listened to.

Sincere regards,

Rachael Bartlett