

# Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory  
Committee - EES

# 727

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

**Full Name:** Jennifer Ruth Carter

**Organisation:**

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** Submission\_re\_EE

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

**Comments:** See attached submission

Date 29/10/2020

Dear Inquiry and Advisory Committee members,

I am writing in response to the EES conducted by Kalbar for the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine Project. I used to visit East Gippsland as a child, and nearly forty years ago chose to move here to live and raise my family. My home is close to the Tambo River, which carries a creeping 'sand slug', the legacy of earlier mining and clearing upstream, and still faces the risk of pollution from the Stockman mine and tailings dam in its headwaters near Benambra. My home is also close to another site near the townships of Mossiface, Bruthen, Wiseleigh, Sarsfield and Tambo Upper which Kalbar had also considered for mineral sands extraction. The inappropriateness of a mining operation in an area such as this was abundantly clear, and the proposal was vociferously rejected by local people. I firmly believe that Kalbar's proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mine also poses unacceptable risks to people, the environment and the regional economy and should not be allowed to proceed.

I would first like to briefly address some of the potential impacts on those who live in the vicinity of the mine (although of course these cannot be neatly 'corralled' off, as I will detail later). Many families live, farm and work in this area, and send their children to the nearby school and kindergarten. In some cases they face compulsory acquisition of land for mining infrastructure. All of them face the grave risks of contamination of air, water and land from dust (including the presence of radioactive and cancer-causing substances) and run-off, as well as the noise generated by a mine operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and a marked increase of heavy traffic. The potential damage to the highly productive vegetable industry on the Lindenow flats (in parts a mere 500m downwind of the proposed mine site) is immense. Further, there is concern that cultural mapping of Gunaikurnai history in the area is incomplete, and that the massive excavation required for the mine would mean the destruction of artefacts and heritage could not be avoided. As is the nature of regional areas, the residents of Glenaladale, Lindenow and other small neighbouring communities are linked to so many of us and our families in East Gippsland through personal, work, business, school, sports and community associations: what hurts them hurts all of us.

The proposed mine has the potential for a series of dire, cascading consequences. It sits on a plateau above the heritage-listed Mitchell River, which flows into the Gippsland Lakes. This jewel is Australia's largest inland waterway: a complex system of inter-related rivers, lakes, lagoons and estuaries. As a keen birdwatcher and walker, I know parts of it well, although there is always more to explore. It includes Ramsar-listed wetlands, home to many species of birds, including migratory species. The Lakes are also home to the Burrunan Dolphin, found only here and in Port Phillip Bay, and only recognised as a separate species of Bottlenose Dolphin in 2011. They are subject to ongoing research by the Marine Mammal Foundation. Also of special note are the Silt Jetties, the longest digitate delta in the world. The Lakes system is, however, already degraded from human activity. This includes, among other things, increased salinity from the deepening of the sea entrance from its historic 3 metres to 5 metres, and reduced freshwater inflow as more is taken from, for one, the Mitchell River. And now Kalbar proposes to take 3 billion litres of water annually from the Mitchell for processing and, yes, dust suppression. Is there really any guarantee possible that its massive mining site, excavated to a depth of 45m, and its 90 hectare tailings dam, will not at some stage, through leaching, run-off, or via the air, contaminate the aquifers, the Mitchell River, and then inevitably the Gippsland Lakes, with potentially catastrophic results? I think not, particularly in an age of climate change with increased cases of extreme weather events, and where of course secure clean water supplies are of critical importance.

East Gippsland is a vibrant and beautiful region. It has a diverse economy, key parts of which are fresh food production and tourism, the latter built around not only the varied coastal features but inland areas such as the Alpine and Mitchell River National Parks. These are sustainable and multi-faceted industries, employing a huge number of people (unlike the proposed mine, which has an expected life span of 15 years and would employ under 200 people) and they face tremendous risks if the Kalbar project were to go ahead. I doubt that you would find many people in this region who are against mining *per se*, but this mineral sands mine, in *this* location, is to my mind totally unacceptable. It would bring inevitably short-term economic rewards to a select and strategic few. The costs, however, (many of them difficult to quantify), would be extensive and be borne both immediately and far into the future, by the many and by our environment. There is a deep sense of injustice coming from those living on farms and in rural communities and townships that have existed for generations, that their lives and livelihoods, the character of their community, the natural and built environments, their diverse economies, and the health of people and animals could be sacrificed for the sake of a short-term industry and corporate profit.

As a matter of simple justice, to the families, communities and existing businesses in this area, and in recognition of the incalculable value of the Gippsland Lakes system, this mine should not be allowed to proceed.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Jennifer Carter