

## Backing Gippsland's Young Farmers

GCM's Young Farmer Program is giving the next generation of Gippsland producers a practical start through affordable land access and long-term security.

Participants Madison Gallagher and Billy Trinder are already leasing GCM-owned farmland within the Fingerboards project area at 20 percent below market rate, producing high-quality crops and contributing local insights to GCM's rehabilitation planning.

"Opportunities like this don't come along very often," said Madison Gallagher. "Having secure access to land has made it possible for me to grow my business and invest in new equipment. It's given me a head start that would've taken years to achieve otherwise."

"It's also been great to work with GCM and show how farming and mining can co-exist," she said. "They've listened to our feedback and used it to plan how farmland will be managed and restored. It feels like a real partnership."



The program reflects GCM's commitment to practical, long-term benefits for the region - supporting local jobs, small business and the future of Gippsland agriculture.

Details on the next round of the Young Farmer Program will be announced soon, and GCM looks forward to sharing them with the community.

[Go to our website to register to apply.](#)

## A Word from Mick

When opportunity knocks in regional Australia, you don't wait for someone else to answer the door.

That's how I see my new role as East Gippsland Community and Stakeholder Lead for Gippsland Critical Minerals. This is about making sure Gippsland's voice is heard - and that local experience and common sense keep shaping how the Fingerboards Project develops.

I've spent my life around this region and the industries that sustain it - forestry, farming, and small business. Gippsland has powered this nation, fed it and built it. Now we have a chance to help secure its future too, through projects that are done the right way, with care, transparency and respect for local communities, land and water.

It's also about real conversations. Whether you've got a question, a concern or just want to see the data for yourself, come and talk to us. We're here to listen, to answer, and to make sure opportunity and responsibility go hand in hand.

If it's easier, I'll come to you. Reach out anytime, I'm happy to drop by your farm, business or kitchen table for a chat, or you can pop into our Bairnsdale office. However we meet, it's about keeping the conversation going and making sure locals stay at the centre of this project.

**Mick Harrington**  
East Gippsland Community  
and Stakeholder Lead

Email: [mharrington@gippslandcriticalminerals.com](mailto:mharrington@gippslandcriticalminerals.com)



## Stay Connected

We're committed to open engagement and transparency. Whether you have a question, a suggestion, or simply want to learn more, please get in touch.

Call us: 1800 791 396  
Email: [contactus@gippslandcriticalminerals.com](mailto:contactus@gippslandcriticalminerals.com)  
Visit: [gippslandcriticalminerals.com](http://gippslandcriticalminerals.com)  
Office: 50 Forge Creek Road, Bairnsdale  
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**Gippsland** Critical Minerals

# Fingerboards Project Newsletter

## Gippsland Steps Onto the World Stage

The past month has marked a big moment for Australia's critical minerals industry, and for East Gippsland's place within it.

With the new agreement between President Trump and Prime Minister Albanese, Australia is set to become a major supplier of critical minerals and rare earths to the United States. It's a clear sign that the world's most advanced economies are looking to Australia for trusted supply, and that what we're working on here in East Gippsland matters on a much bigger stage.

That message came through strongly when Dominic Raab, former UK Deputy Prime Minister and now Head of Global Affairs for Appian Capital, visited Gippsland earlier this month. Appian is the UK investment group behind Gippsland Critical Minerals, and Dom took the opportunity to meet with stakeholders and speak on ABC Gippsland about what this new agreement means in practice.

Fingerboards is one of only two heavy rare earth (DyTb) mines in Victoria with no Chinese ownership or offtake agreements. For this reason, Raab described the Fingerboards Project as a "triple win" for Victoria, for Australia's sovereign capability, and for our international partners who are working together to build secure, sustainable supply chains.

He also outlined how the project has been completely reshaped to better manage environmental concerns and that it has the potential to create 300 local jobs, generate \$90 million in regional economic activity, and deliver \$180 million in royalties to the state.

For East Gippsland, that global momentum translates into local prosperity. The opportunities created by this shift will not just be seen in export figures or national policy announcements, they'll be felt through new apprenticeships, contracts for local businesses, and greater demand for skills and services across our towns.

The opportunity is clear, but so is the responsibility. Every safeguard, every study, and every conversation we've had with community and regulators has been about getting this right. From how we manage water, to how we restore land, to how we listen and respond.

The next step is the Demonstration Pit and Rehabilitation Trials, which will show how those systems perform under real conditions. It's where we move from design to evidence, and where people will be able to see exactly how our approach to safety, rehabilitation and environmental care works in practice. Once the Demonstration Pit is up and running, the community will be able to come down and have a look.

East Gippsland has always been a region that builds things, grows things and powers things. Now we have the chance to help power the industries of the future.



## From Plans to Practice

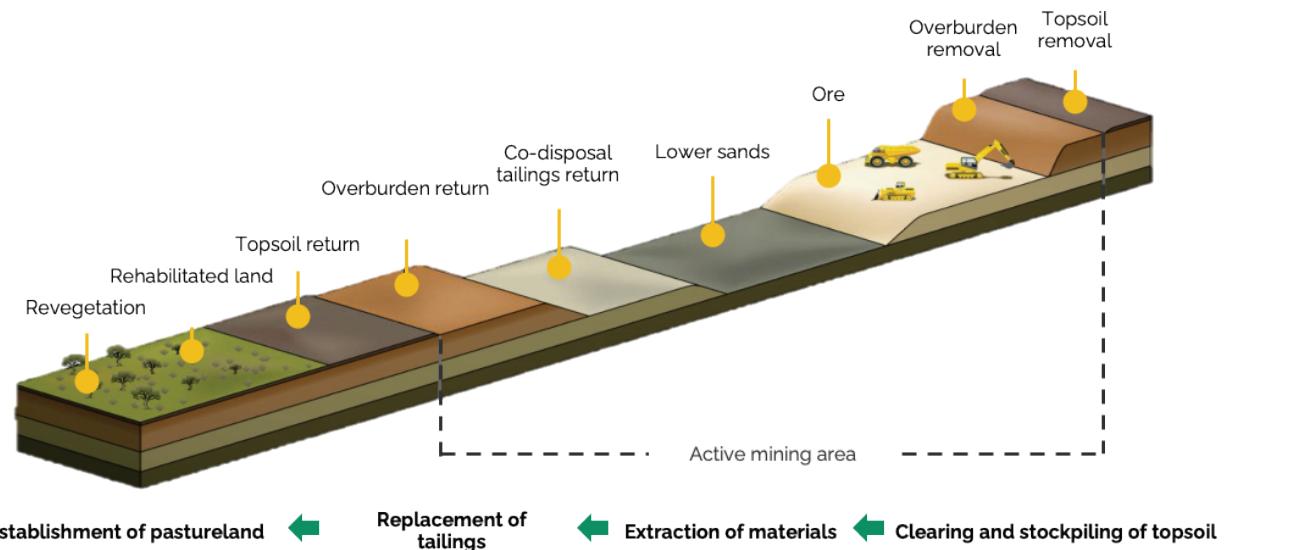
Over the past year, we've worked hard to redesign the Fingerboards Project around stronger environmental safeguards and local feedback. The next step is to prove that design in practice.

From January 2026, work will begin on the Mining and Rehabilitation Demonstration Pit (MRDP), a small-scale site that tests our mining and rehabilitation methods under real conditions. It's where plans on paper become performance on the ground.

The MRDP sits within the proposed project area and allows us to trial excavation and backfilling methods, demonstrating environmental controls for dust, radiation, water and rehabilitation. Independent monitoring will track performance and verified data will be shared so the community can see how the design works in practice.

The pit sits well above regional aquifers, with studies confirming there is no interaction with groundwater. Monitoring bores will collect and test any water on site to confirm that controls are working as designed.

A modular separation plant will process small quantities of ore to produce tailings identical to those expected during operations. This will help us understand tailings behaviour and confirm how water can be recovered, treated and reused within a closed system. Small amounts of flocculants, the same materials widely used in local agriculture and water treatment, will also be tested to support this process.



## Project Update: Environmental Studies



"The Demonstration Pit is where we prove performance, not intent," said Project Director Stefan Wolmarans. "It's about showing that our design works as planned, that water is contained, dust is controlled, and land can be safely refilled and rehabilitated within 12 months."

"Every part of this process will be subject to stringent oversight from state and federal regulators," Stefan said. "The standards are clear, if the test site doesn't perform, the mine won't proceed. That's the level of accountability built into this process, and we welcome it."

Rehabilitation will follow the same sequence planned for the full project: excavation, backfilling, contouring, soil replacement and revegetation, allowing us to refine each step before full-scale mining. Working with a local agronomist, we'll trial different seed mixes and crop types suited to local soils and rainfall, tracking results across multiple seasons to measure soil health, plant growth and water quality.

Once operational, the Demonstration Pit will be open for visits by regulators, Traditional Owners, local representatives and community members, providing a direct view of how the redesigned approach performs on the ground.

Extensive studies are now underway across key environmental, technical and social areas. These investigations, led by independent experts including AECOM, will be peer reviewed and publicly shared as they are completed.

In the coming weeks, we'll be publishing the detailed scopes of these studies on our website so the community can see exactly what's being assessed and how. Additional studies will be added as the process continues to ensure all relevant matters are thoroughly examined.

Our approach remains clear - strong science, open communication and independent scrutiny at every stage.

## Come and Talk with Us



### Upcoming Drop-in Sessions

#### Lindenow:

Saturday 15 November,  
10am-12pm,  
Lindenow General Store

#### Sale:

Wednesday 26 November,  
5-7pm,  
Sporting Legends

You can also visit our Bairnsdale Office at 50 Forge Creek Road, open weekdays for anyone wanting to view project materials or speak with the team.

#### Community Webinar

Can't make it in person?  
Join our upcoming online information session to hear directly from the GCM team and ask questions live.

Register for the webinar and sign up for email updates at [gippslandcriticalminerals.com](http://gippslandcriticalminerals.com).



## Reviving Gippsland's Rail Freight

GCM has created a new Rail Freight Taskforce bringing together local industry, government, and logistics operators to re-establish a reliable freight route between Bairnsdale and Melbourne.

The Taskforce is assessing how new infrastructure at Fernbank can work together with the existing Fenning Intermodal Freight Terminal (FIFT) to deliver long-term benefits for regional producers and businesses.

The goal in the first instance is to understand the demand for a multi-user freight solution from local industries such as timber, agriculture, and manufacturing, while reducing heavy vehicle pressure on local roads.

A proposed new Fernbank rail siding would allow mineral concentrate to be transported directly from the project area to Melbourne by rail, removing hundreds of truck movements from East Gippsland's road network each week. This would help lower emissions, improve road safety and create a steady, local freight base to support investment in regional rail.

"Freight is one of the biggest opportunities for regional collaboration," said Senior Advisor Geoff Shepherd. "By partnering with local industries and freight operators, we can help make rail viable again for East Gippsland."

The Rail Freight Taskforce is scheduled to meet for the first time in December, with expressions of interest still open for local businesses and organisations who wish to participate in the initiative. The group will bring together government and business stakeholders to prepare a shared business case for the proposed corridor.

For GCM, rail freight is about creating infrastructure that delivers benefits long after mining is complete.

**Go to our website to register to apply.**

