

Community Reference Group

Meeting #5

11 Dec 2025

Quest, Bairnsdale



Meeting #5 Agenda

| Agenda Item | Start | Duration | Finish | Lead |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| LUNCH | 11:30 | 0:30 | 12:00 | All |
| Welcome & Introductions | 12:00 | 0:10 | 12:10 | John |
| Project Update | 12:10 | 0:20 | 12:30 | Michelle |
| Self-Referral Overview | 12:30 | 0:55 | 13:25 | Bryan |
| BREAK | 13:25 | 0:15 | 13:40 | All |
| Self-Referral Overview (Cont.) | 13:40 | 0:55 | 14:35 | Bryan |
| Community Engagement Update | 14:35 | 0:30 | 15:05 | Mick |
| Q&A | 15:05 | 0:45 | 15:50 | All |
| Meeting Wrap Up & Next Steps | 15:50 | 0:10 | 16:00 | John |

Welcome & Introductions



John Mitchell
CRG Chairperson

Gippsland Critical Minerals acknowledges the Gunaikurnai People as the Traditional Custodians of Country that encompasses the proposed Fingerboards Project area.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and recognise their enduring connection to the land, waters, culture, and community.

Today's Presenters

Project Update



Michelle Wood
CEO

Self-Referral Overview



Bryan Chadwick
Lead Environmental Consultant

Community Engagement Update



Mick Harrington
East Gippsland Community &
Stakeholder Lead

Project Update



Michelle Wood
CEO

What Else is Happening – Vic Mining Approvals

| Project / Mine | Date / Month (2025) | Type of Approval | Status / Key Details |
|---|--|---|---|
| Goschen Rare Earths and Mineral Sands Project (by VHM Limited) | April 2025 | 20-year mining licence + mining work plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licence granted by Resources Victoria.. • Work plan approved – allows mining of mineral sands & rare earths. • Obligations include real-time dust monitoring, community feedback reports, progressive rehabilitation. |
| Goschen Project | 28 Nov 2025 (announcement) | Confirmation of work plan approval / go-ahead | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project formally “to progress” per Resources Victoria update. |
| Fosterville Gold Mine (Sustained Operations Project — SOP) | 15 May 2025 | Minister’s assessment under environment laws (EES) for SOP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SOP – covering ongoing operations including underground mining extension, tailings facilities, waste-rock dumps, aquifer recharge, etc. passed the environment assessment. |
| Fosterville Gold Mine | October 2025 | Work Plan Variation (WPV) – approval of new TSF (tailings facility) & ventilation shaft | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WPV submitted August 2025; approved in Oct 2025, enabling TSF5 and mine ventilation works. |
| Fosterville Gold Mine | 6 November 2025 | Expansion approved at federal level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The federal government approved expansion near Bendigo – allowing continued underground mining, new infrastructure (tailings dams, shafts), supporting 1,000 jobs, with environmental conditions to protect threatened species & habitat. |
| Sunday Creek Project (by Southern Cross Gold) | Late Nov 2025 (announcement 27 Nov 2025) | Exploration tunnel approval / exploration-phase work plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources Victoria approved an exploration tunnel for the project – enabling underground access to high-grade mineralisation. |

2025 Key Achievements

Regulatory & Technical

GCM met all its milestones for RL2026 Year 3 –
RL2026 Year 4 commenced

Regulatory Milestones

- Draft EES Self-Referral lodged with IAU in Sep 2025
- Mining & Demonstration Pit (MRDP) workplan submitted – received approved Dec 2025
- Concordance table provided, demonstrating progress on all IAC recommendations

Technical & Design Progress

- Concept Definition Study (CDS) advanced toward pre-feasibility
- Rail Freight Taskforce established (credible baseload pathway)
- Impact assessment accelerated under AECOM
- Expanded monitoring: extra weather station, dust network, quarterly water sampling
- Tailings & rehab test work confirmed in-pit co-disposal and water recovery parameters

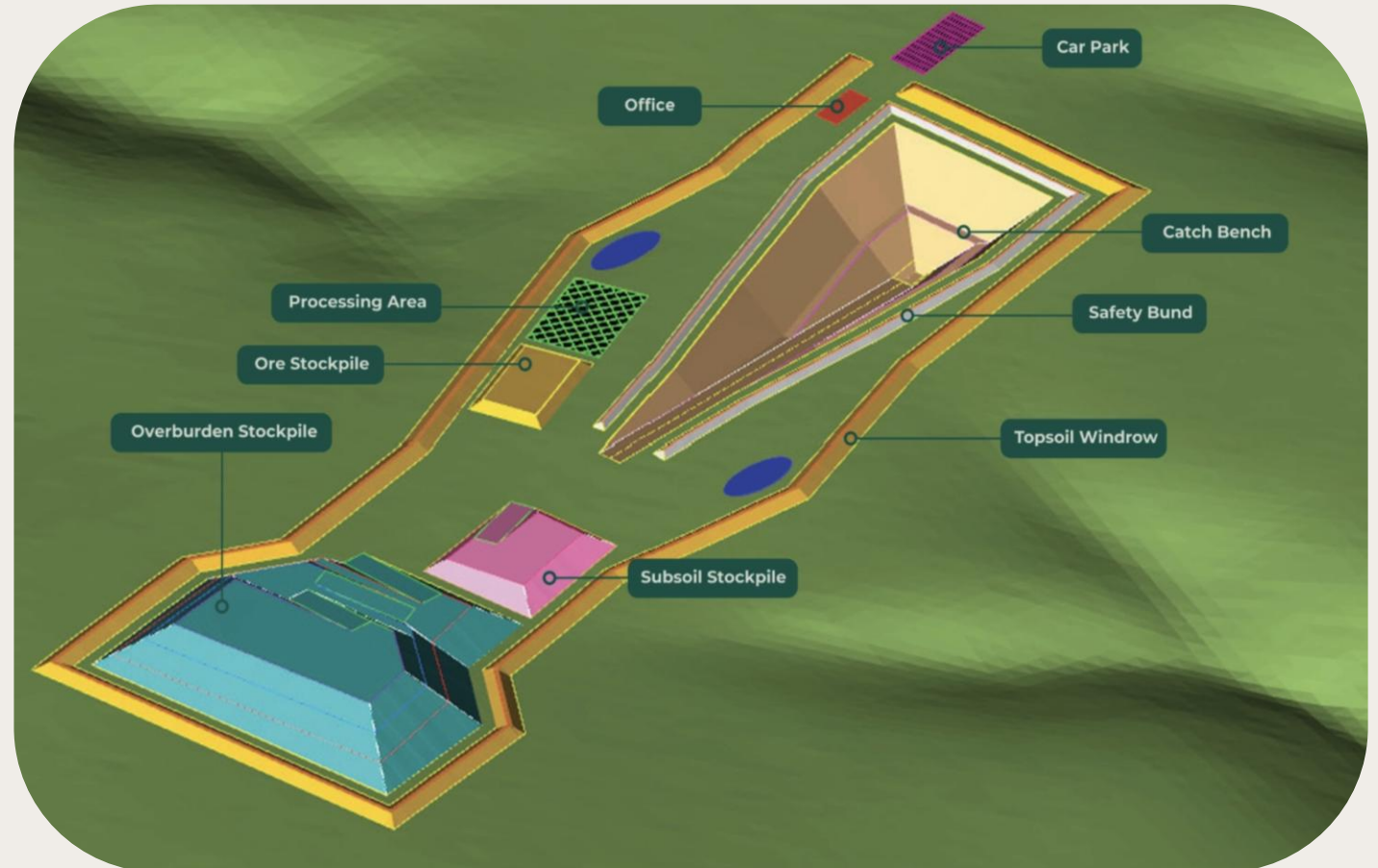
| Year 3 | | Year 4 | |
|---|--------|--|--------|
| Milestones | Status | Milestones | Status |
| #23 Rescope – boundaries and buffer changes | ■ | #37 Continue Concept Definition Study | ■ |
| #24 Commence Concept Definition Study (CDS or FS) | ■ | #38 Community Engagement | ■ |
| #25 Complete assay samples from Fingerboards 2022 infill drilling | ■ | #39 Community Benefits | ■ |
| #26 Community Engagement Plan | ■ | #40 First Nations | ■ |
| #27 Key Stakeholder Policies and Procedures | ■ | #41 Community Sentiment | ■ |
| #28 Community Benefits | ■ | #42 Assess Stakeholder Expectations & Priorities | ■ |
| #29 Community Sentiment | ■ | #43 Advance Access Agreements | ■ |
| #30 Assess Stakeholder Expectations and Priorities | ■ | #44 Environmental Baseline Monitoring | ■ |
| #31 Inform Community | ■ | #45 Climate Modelling | ■ |
| #32 Advance access agreements | ■ | #46 Rehabilitation Trials | ■ |
| #33 Environmental Baseline Monitoring | ■ | #47 Impact Assessment Studies – Commenced/ Continued | ■ |
| #34 Climate Modelling | ■ | #48 EES Decision on new referral | ■ |
| #35 Rehabilitation Trials | ■ | #49 Water Sources & Supply | ■ |
| #36 Impact Assessment Studies – Commenced | ■ | | |

MRDP Workplan - Approved

4 December 2025 – GCM received approved of our Mining & Demonstration Pit (MRDP) workplan.

Approved with Conditions:

1. Prior to commencement of works (ore extraction), the licensee must obtain authority under section 113 of the Mineral Resource (Sustainable Development) Act 1990.
2. Prior to commencement of works (ore extraction), licensee must provide the Chief Inspector a copy of a current radiation management license issued by the Department of Health under the Radiation Act 2005. The licensee must maintain a valid radiation management license for the life of the mining operation.

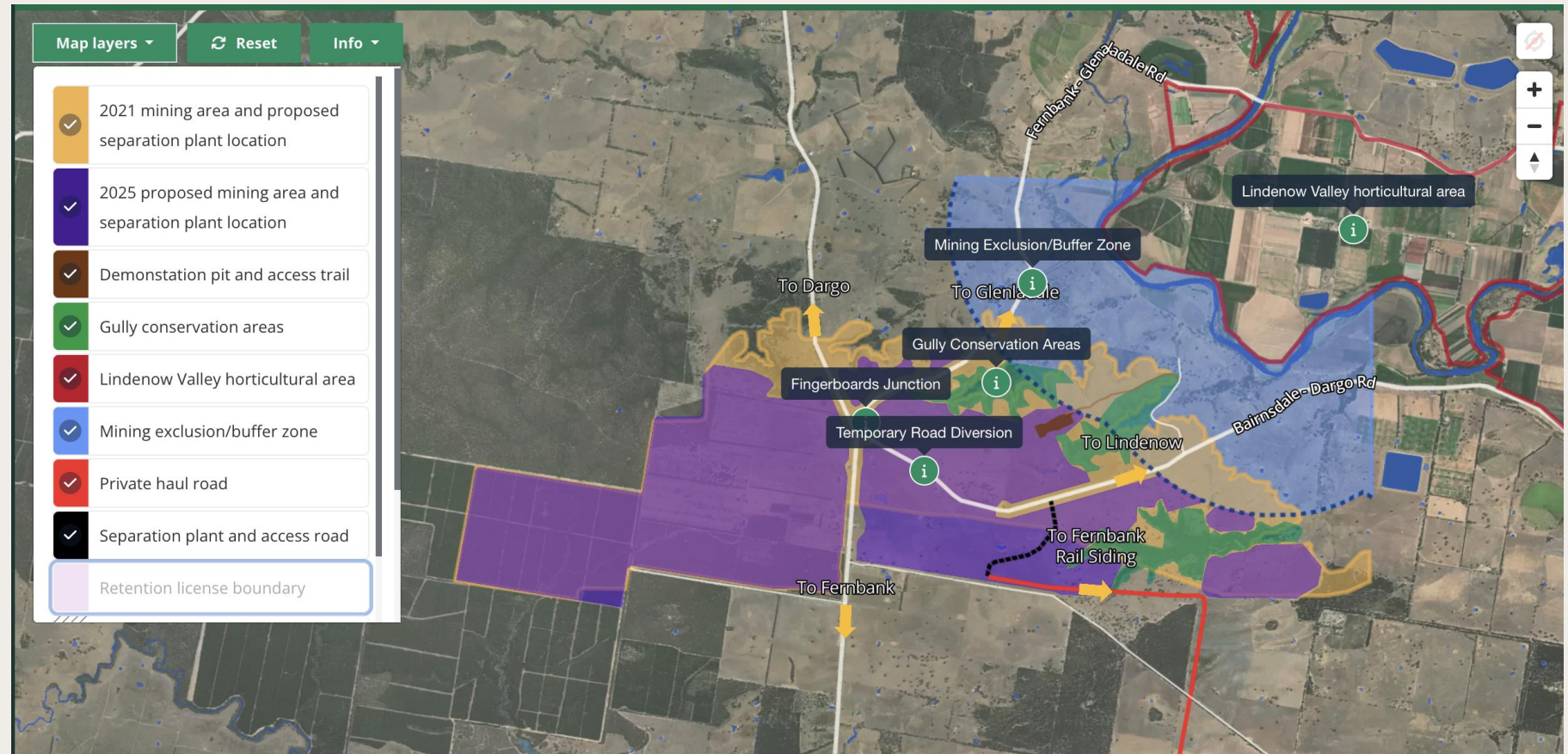


2025 Key Achievements

Project Rescope & Environmental Improvements

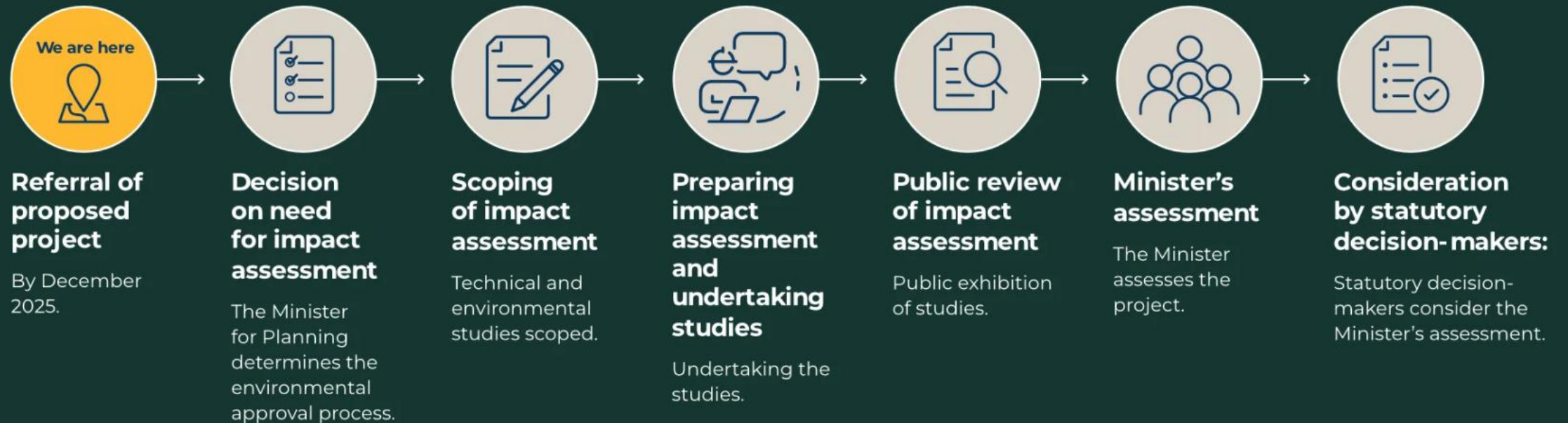
A number of key design changes were made to our project during an iterative design process in response to government and community feedback.

1. 1.5km Buffer Zone & Gully Conservation Areas
2. Slowing the Ore Mining Rate
3. Smaller Active Mining Area
4. Less On-Surface Trucks
5. Storage Shed for Concentrate
6. Examining options for new process plant location and new rail siding
7. Road relocations reduced, Fingerboards intersection retained
8. Improved Tailings Management Strategy
9. Onshore Processing
10. New Rehabilitation Strategy & Demonstration Pit
11. Water Source from Multiple Sources
12. Long-term Community Water Security



Approvals Timeline

Steps in the Environmental Assessment Process



Self-Referral Update



Bryan Chadwick
Lead Environmental Consultant

Agenda

1. What is a “Self-Referral” and where does it sit within Victorian impact assessment process
2. EE Act (Vic) vs EPBC Act (Cth) referrals
3. What makes up an EE Act Referral
4. Next steps – opportunities for input from community
5. Timelines

Referral – relevance

Why needed:

- Mechanism to allow GCM to present Project for assessment – under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*
- Condition of Retention Licence (#4)

4. The licensee must have self-referred the project to the Minister for Planning for a decision on the need for assessment under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* by 11 December 2025.

Why now:

- GCM has done the work to re-design project – to address 2021 Minister’s Assessment and make the project viable
- Deadline imposed by RL2026 – essentially a “put-up or shut-up”

Environment Effects Act 1978

Purpose:

- It establishes a framework for assessing the environmental impacts of proposed projects that may have significant effects on Victoria's environment.

Referral:

- The referral process is the first formal step under the Act
- Project proponent or decision-maker submits a referral to the Minister for Planning to determine if the project could have significant environmental effects and whether an Environment Effects Statement (EES) or other assessment is required

Self-Referral:

- Nothing different to Referral under EE Act – link to RL2026 condition

Definition:

- The term “environment” under the EE Act includes physical, biological, social, economic, and even cultural and spiritual aspects, ensuring a holistic approach to impact assessment

Environment Effects Act 1978

Referral outcome:

- Once a referral is accepted, statutory approval processes for the project are generally paused until the Minister's decision is made.
- If an EES is required, all subsequent approvals must take the Minister's assessment into account before proceeding

Impact assessment goal:

- Inform decision-makers and the community about environmental impacts before approvals

Key features:

- Transparent and rigorous assessment
- Community input at multiple stages

Not an approval:

- It informs statutory decisions, but does not grant approval

When is a Referral Required?

Trigger:

- Normally: If a proponent wants a project approved, and there is the potential for significant environmental effects – it will enter EE Act process, which is initially submission of a referral.
- Fingerboards:
 - no question that potentially significant environmental effects
 - condition of Retention Licence.

Who can refer:

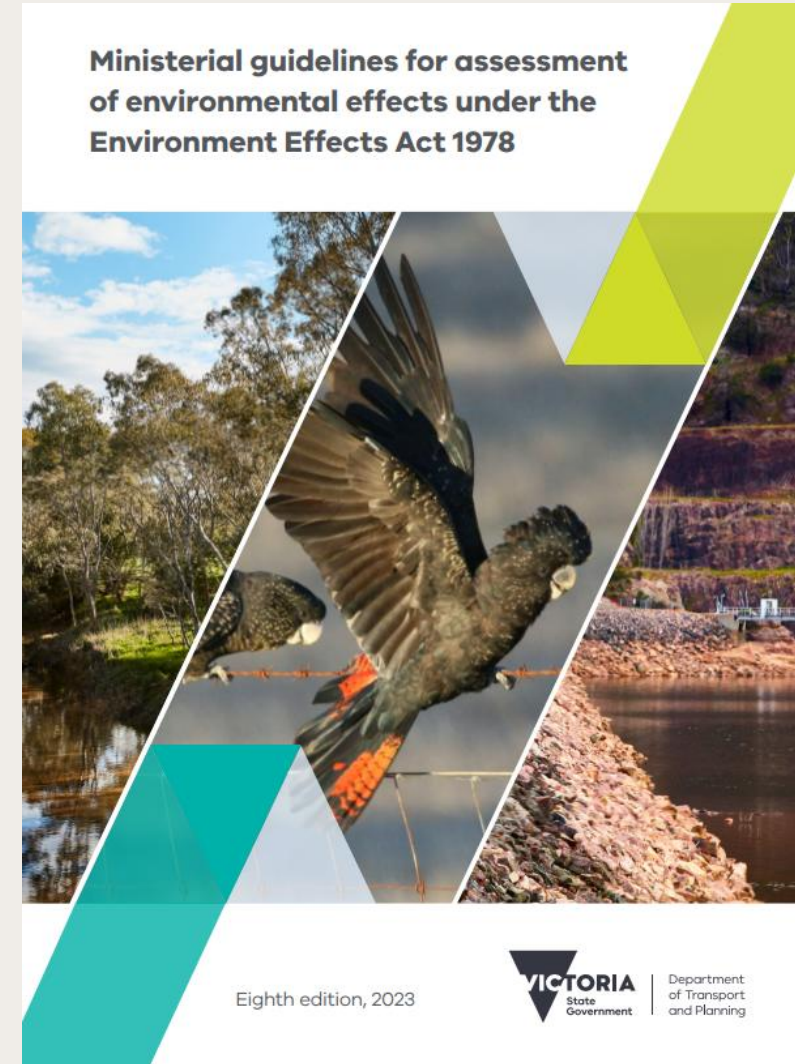
- Project proponent; or
- Any decision maker required by an Act or law to make a decision in respect of the project

Criteria:

- “significant environmental effects” - based on Ministerial Guidelines (e.g. biodiversity, cultural heritage, cumulative impacts)

Ministerial Guidelines

1. Types of potential effects on the environment that warrant referral of a project
2. What matters does the Minister consider when deciding if an assessment is required in response to a referral
3. EES Process



Ministerial Guidelines – Referral Criteria

- Potential removal, destruction or lopping of **10 ha** or more of **native vegetation**
- Potential **clearing** of an area determined as **'critical habitat'** under the FFG Act
- Potential for **extensive or major effects** on the use and environmental values of **water resources**
- Potential **for extensive or major effects** to **human health or the environment**, or displacement of residents, from pollution or waste emitted to air, land, water or groundwater
- Potential for greenhouse gas emissions exceeding **200,000 tonnes** of carbon dioxide equivalent per year

Table 1: Referral criteria

| Individual referral criteria Individual types of potential effects on the environment that warrant referral of a project. | Combined referral criteria A combination of two or more types of potential effects on the environment that warrant referral of a project. |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential removal, destruction or lopping of 10 hectares or more of native vegetation¹, that consists of, or comprises a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an ecological vegetation class (EVC) classified as endangered; or – an EVC that is classified as vulnerable (with a condition score of 0.5 or more) or rare (with a condition score of 0.6 or more); and – that is not authorised for removal under an approved forest management plan² or fire protection plan. • Potential clearing of an area determined as 'critical habitat' under the <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i>. • Potential for loss of a significant proportion (e.g. 1 percent or greater) of known remaining habitat or population of a threatened species within Victoria. • Potential for long-term change to the ecological character of a wetland listed under the Ramsar Convention or in <i>A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia</i>. • Potential for extensive or major effects on the use and environmental values of water resources due to changes in water quality, water availability, stream flows, water system function, or regional groundwater levels, or the health or biodiversity of aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems, over the long term. • Potential for extensive or major effects to human health or the environment, or displacement of residents, from pollution or waste emitted to air, land, water or groundwater. • Potential for greenhouse gas emissions exceeding 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per annum (direct and indirect) attributable to the operation of the facility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential removal, destruction or lopping of 10 hectares or more of native vegetation¹, unless it is authorised for removal under an approved forest management plan² or fire protection plan. • Matters listed under the <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – potential loss of a significant area of a listed ecological community; or – potential loss of a genetically important population of an endangered or threatened species (listed or nominated for listing), including from loss or fragmentation of habitats; or – potentially significant effects on habitat values of a wetland supporting migratory bird species. • Potential for extensive or major effects on landscape values of regional importance, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – where recognised by a planning scheme overlay; – declared as a distinctive area and landscape under the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>; or – within or adjoining land reserved under the <i>National Parks Act 1975</i>. • Potential for extensive or major effects to the environment due to changes in land stability, disturbance of acid sulphate soils or project-induced soil erosion over the short or long term. • Potential for extensive or major effects on social or economic well-being due to direct or indirect displacement of non-residential land use activities. • Potential for extensive displacement of residents or severance of residents' access to their community resources. • Potential for significant effects on the amenity of a substantial number of residents, due to extensive or major, long-term changes in visual, noise and traffic conditions. • Potential for extensive or major effects on Aboriginal cultural heritage values protected under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>. • Potential for extensive or major effects on cultural heritage places and sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Register or the Victorian Heritage Inventory under the <i>Heritage Act 2017</i>. |

Ministerial Guidelines – Matters Minister considers when considering if (or what type) of assessment

- the range and **complexity** of potential effects and associated uncertainty
- the **adequacy** of existing standards to address potentially significant effects
- the potential efficacy of **avoidance** and mitigation measures that may be implemented
- the **availability of project alternatives** that may warrant investigation to assess opportunities to avoid or minimise adverse environmental effects
- the **benefits of an integrated assessment** that would not otherwise be achieved under existing statutory assessment processes
- the **level of public interest** in a proposed project

Difference between EE Act (Vic) vs EPBC Act (Cmth) Referrals

EE Act (Victoria):

- **Scope:** Focuses on projects that may have significant environmental effects within Victoria, considering physical, biological, social, economic, and cultural impacts at a state or regional level.
- **Decision:** The Victorian Minister for Planning decides whether an Environment Effects Statement (EES) or other assessment is required. The decision is based on state-level referral criteria and usually made within 20 business days.

EPBC Act (Commonwealth):

- **Scope:** Applies if a project is likely to significantly impact a **Matter of National Environmental Significance** (MNES), such as threatened species, World Heritage areas, Ramsar wetlands, or Commonwealth land.
- **Decision:** The Australian Environment Minister determines if the action is a controlled action under the EPBC Act. If so, it triggers a formal Commonwealth assessment and approval process.
 - Bilateral Agreement

Accredited assessments

Bilateral agreement:

- Between the Australian and Victorian governments
- State assessment are accredited to assess impacts on matters of national environmental significance under the *Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)

EPBC Act Reform Bill 2025

- Was passed by Parliament on 28 November 2025, but it does not take effect immediately
- Reforms will likely begin **mid-2026**, once the Government finalises the National Environmental Standards (NES) and sets up the new framework
- Projects already referred and awaiting a decision when the new laws start will continue under the current EPBC Act

EE Act Referral - Content

Part 1 – PROPONENT DETAILS, PROJECT DESCRIPTION & LOCATION

1. Proponent details
2. Project - brief outline
3. Project description / rationale / main components
4. Project alternatives
5. Exclusions
6. Project implementation
7. Description of proposed site or area of investigation
8. Existing environment
9. Land availability and control
10. Required approvals

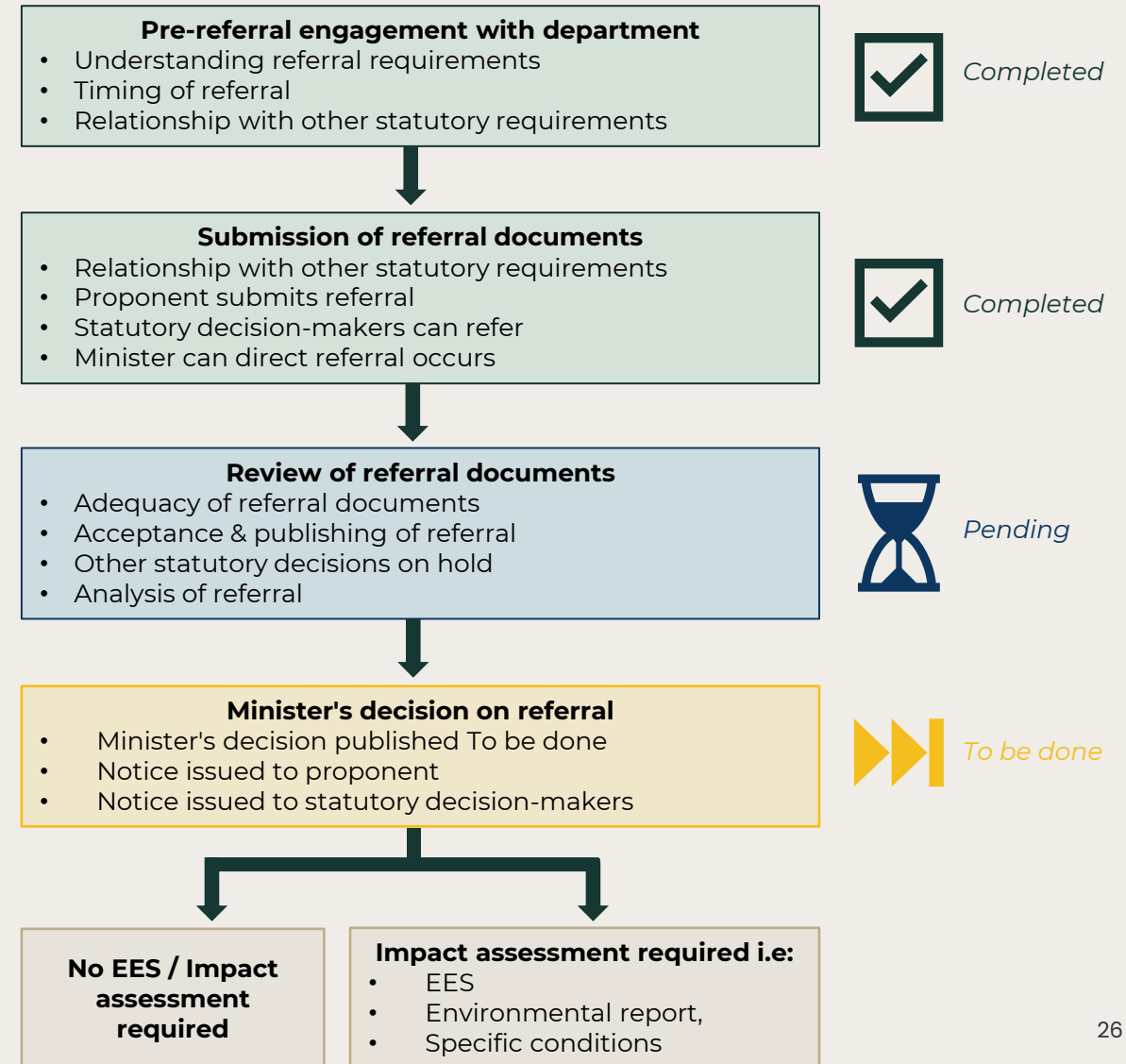
Content Submitted EE Act Referral

Part 2 – POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

1. Potentially significant environmental effects
2. Native vegetation, flora and fauna
3. Water environments
4. Landscape and soils
5. Social environments
6. Energy, wastes & greenhouse gas emissions
7. Other environmental issues
8. Environmental management
9. Other activities
10. Investigation program

Fingerboards Referral Process to Date

- **Referral:** Project referred to Minister for Planning
 - 25 September 2025: submitted draft
 - 21 November 2025: receipt of comments
 - 05 December 2025: submitted update
 - waiting
- **Decision:** Victorian Minister for Planning will need to decide – three options:
 1. An EES is required
 2. An EES is not required if conditions specified by the Minister are met
 - e.g. environment report
 3. An EES is not required

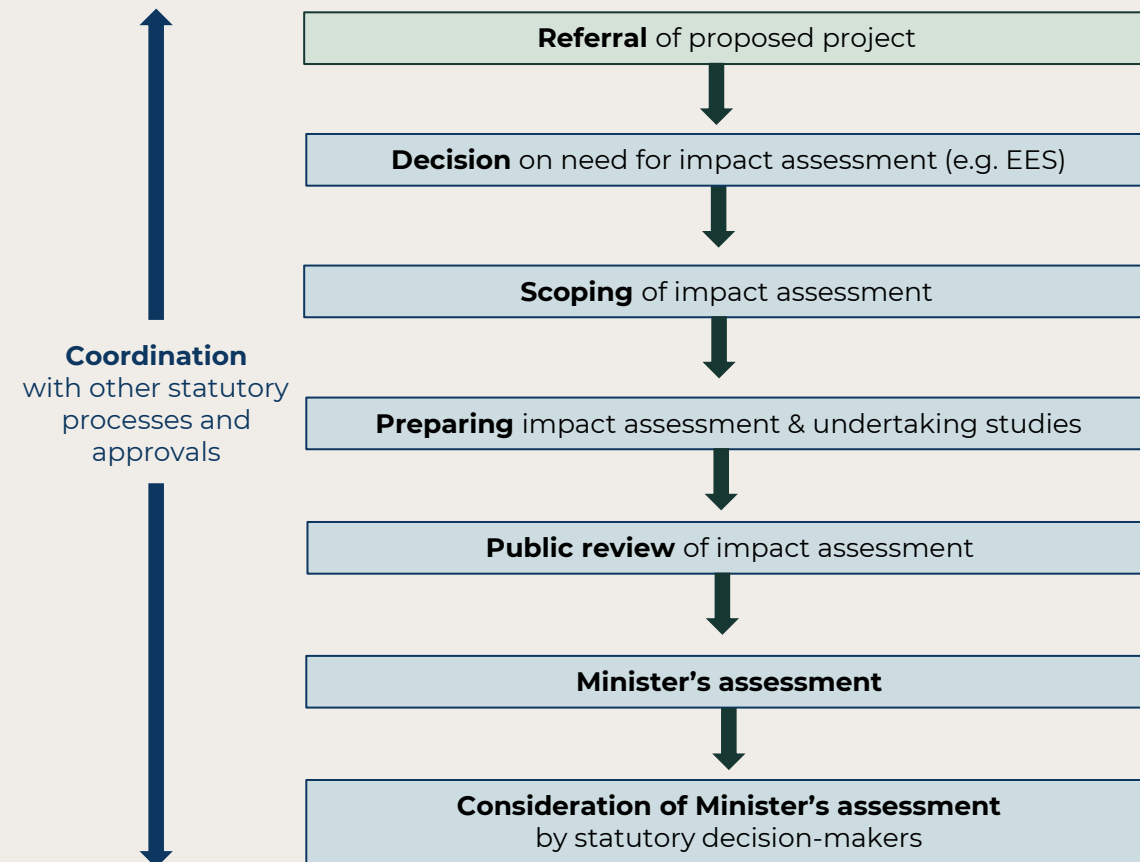


If outcome is environmental impact assessment:

Next steps:

- **Scoping:**
 - preparing draft scope (essentially a terms of reference for the assessment)
 - Will include public and agency comment
 - Final scope published
- **Preparing**
 - Impact assessments to meet scope

Overview of processes under the Environmental Effects Act:



What you will see next

- **Referral accepted and published**
 - <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessments/browse-projects>
- **Minister's decision on Referral**
 - Same website
 - Include reasons for decision
- **Scope (if EES decision)**
 - Department will draft Scoping Requirements
 - Exhibited (15 business days)
 - GCM will be required to advertise prior
 - Submissions received
 - Department will finalise and publish

Browse EES projects and referrals

View current and completed EES projects and referrals.

Search by keywords 🔍

[Hide Filters -](#)

Assessment type

Select assessment type ▾

Status

Select status ▾

Council

Select council ▾

Type

Select type ▾

Date range (Referral accepted)

📅 Enter date from

📅 Enter date to

Show accredited assessments

Apply filters

Displaying 1 - 10 of 215 results

| Project Name | Project type | Referral accepted date | Referral decision | Assessment type | Status |
|---|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Montrose Quarry Extension | Extractive/quarry | 6 October 2025 | | Referral | REFERRAL ACCEPTED |
| Tall Tree Wind Farm | Wind farm onshore | 18 June 2025 | EES 18 September 2025 | EES | REFERRAL DECISION MADE |
| Blue Hills Quarry | Extractive/quarry | 17 June 2025 | EES 03 October 2025 | EES | REFERRAL DECISION MADE |

Timelines

| Month & Year | Action |
|-----------------------|--|
| December 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope to have Referral accepted |
| January/February 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral decision |
| February/March 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition of Draft Scoping Requirements |
| March 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Scoping Requirements published |

Community Engagement Update



Mick Harrington
East Gippsland Community & Stakeholder Lead

What I'm Hearing & Seeing

Engagement Methods

- Drop-in Sessions
- Media
- Local Events
- In-Office Visits
- Stakeholders meeting
- Industry Round Tables
- Pro-active reach out

Key Stakeholders interacted with

- Local Landholders
- Lindenow Valley Hort
- Local MP's
- GAgG Roundtable
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Local Government
- Residents of local towns

What I'm Hearing & Seeing

Key concerns raised

- Flocculant use in mining operations / demo pit
- Shallow Aquifer contamination
- River health
- Rehabilitation post-mining
- Impacts to local tourism
- Dust contamination on crops and pastures
- Dust impacts to human health
- Mental health

Areas of opportunity

- Local Jobs
- Local Training
- Apprenticeship Pathways
- Economic Diversification
- Water Infrastructure
- Legacy Projects
- Freight Rail

Agriculture / Horticulture Consulting

What was Achieved

- Visited a number of local landholders with Roop and Bruce of AgriQulture Consulting
- Spoke about farm productivity / profitability, and potential risks from mining to profitability and safety, as well as any potential benefits of having the project nearby.

Concerns

- Farmers not investing in potential infrastructure as they are not certain of ROI
- Uncertainty around being able to remain in houses close to the mine
- Potential contamination of Mitchell River irrigation water
- Biosecurity and Market accreditation eg. EU
- Potential loss of local historic sites (eg. historic shearing sheds etc)

Areas of Opportunity

- Obtain leases on GCM-owned land both pre and post-mining nearby to existing operations
- Benefit from water and energy infrastructure post-mining
- Gain the ability to combine farm income with off-farm income with GCM or downstream businesses.

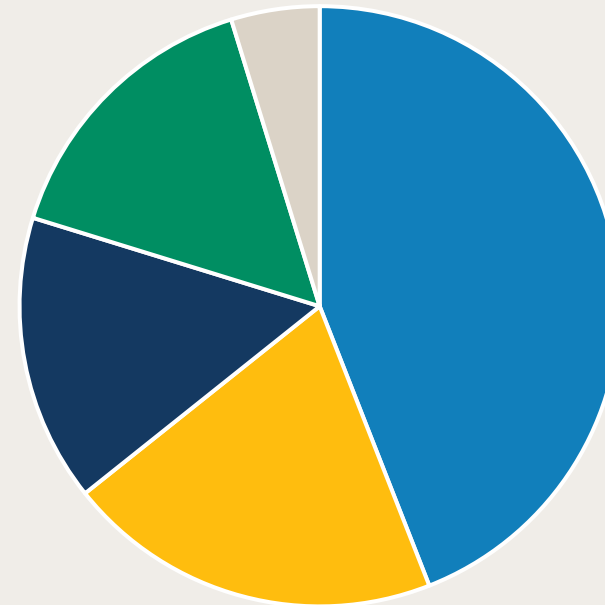
2026 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

37 total engagement activities planned across January–December 2026.

- Consistent presence: 2–3 events per month
- Mix of high-traffic retail visits (info sessions held in shopping precincts, main streets, or community hubs), drop-ins, CRG meetings, webinars, major events
- Strong emphasis on Bairnsdale retail visibility and Lindenow South operations
- Introduction of Fernbank Hall as a dedicated project-adjacent venue

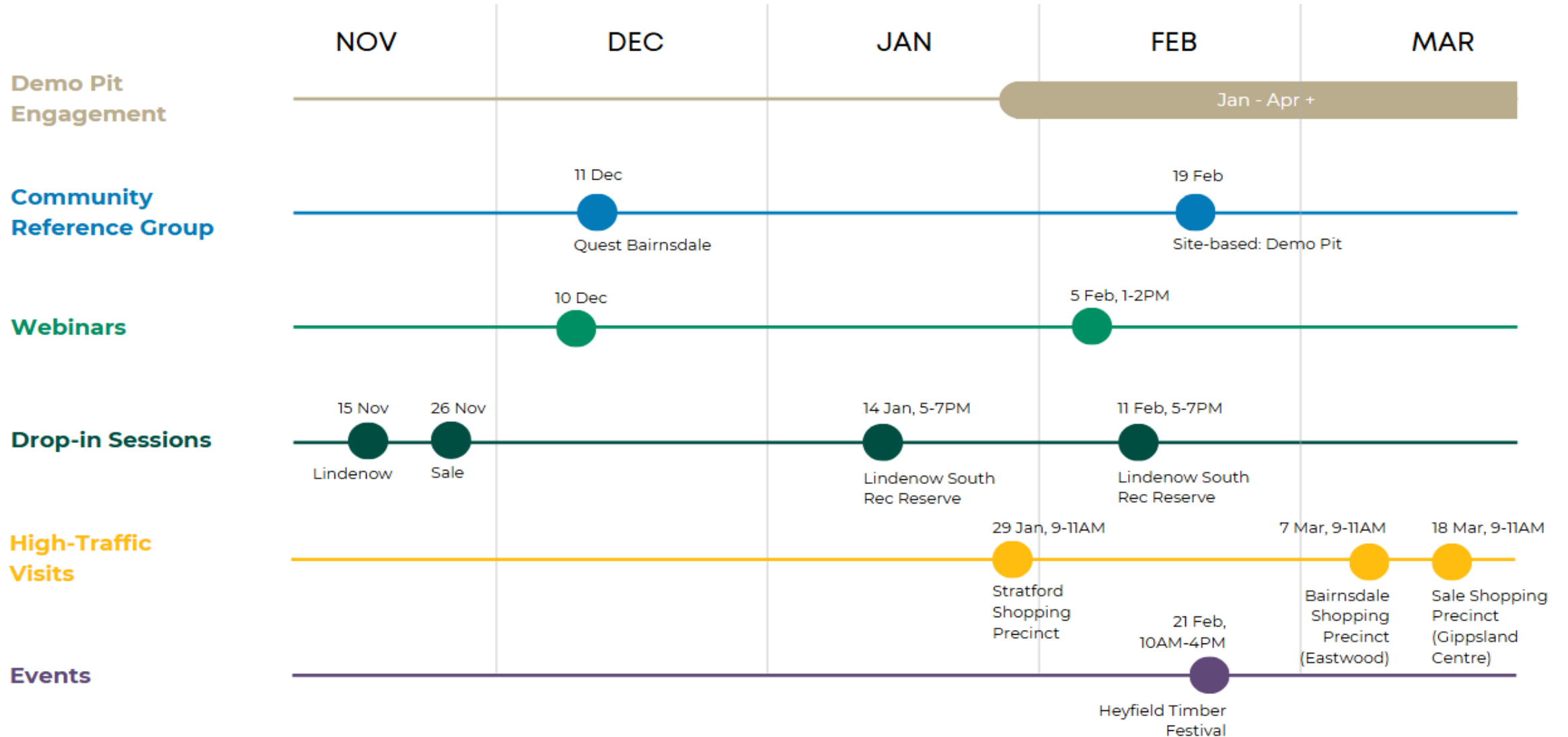
2026 Engagement Type Breakdown

- High-Traffic Visits: 17 events
- Drop-In Sessions: 8 events
- CRG Meetings: 4 events
- Webinars: 6 events
- Major Events: 2 events
- Demonstration Pit Visits: Not counted in fixed total (ad hoc)



■ High-Traffic Visits ■ Drop-in Sessions ■ CRG Meetings ■ Webinars ■ Major Events

2026 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy



Working Group Interest

CRG Sub-groups

Community Engagement & Communications

Carolyn Cameron
Joshua Nelson
Trevor Hancock
Vesna Rendulic

Environmental & Technical

Alf Chown
Andrew Sheridan
Carolyn Cameron
Joshua Nelson
Peter Reefman
Rohan Reynolds

Environmental & Technical Studies

Alf Chown
Andrew Sheridan
Carolyn Cameron
Joshua Nelson
Peter Reefman

Mine Design & Rehabilitation (inc final land use, land care)

Andrew Sheridan
Joshua Nelson
Peter Reefman

Water Supply, Management, & Irrigator Interface

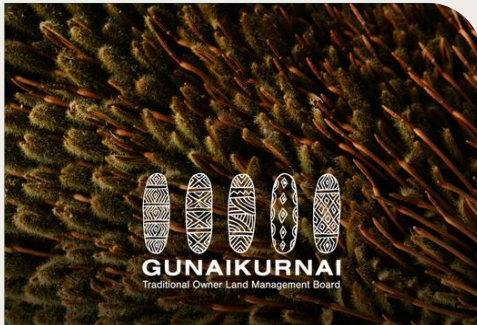
Alf Chown
Carolyn Cameron
Joshua Nelson
Peter Reefman
Rohan Reynolds

Working Group Interest

Benefit Sharing

PILLAR 1

Cultural Heritage
Protection and First
Nations Empowerment



Carolyn Cameron
Rohan Reynolds
Trevor Hancock

PILLAR 2

Local Workforce/Supply
Capacity & Industry
Partnerships



Alf Chown
Geoff Wells
Joshua Nelson
Rohan Reynolds
Trevor Hancock
Vesna Rendulic

PILLAR 3

Investment in Local
Infrastructure & Legacy
Assets



Alf Chown
Carolyn Cameron
Joshua Nelson
Rohan Reynolds
Trevor Hancock
Vesna Rendulic

PILLAR 4

Community Vibrancy
and Liveability



Carolyn Cameron
Trevor Hancock
Vesna Rendulic

Formation of Working Groups

5 Working Groups

- Community Engagement & Communications
- Environmental & Technical
- Benefit Sharing Pillar 2 - Local Workforce/Supply Capacity and Industry Partnerships
- Benefit Sharing Pillar 3 - Investment in Local Infrastructure & Legacy Assets
- Benefit Sharing Pillar 4 - Community Vibrancy & Liveability

Information

- Each Working Group is;
 - Made up of an 8 person panel comprising 3 CRG members, 4 community members and 1 Local Government or Statutory Authority Rep
 - Non-remunerated
 - Oversight by Mick Harrington (GCM); Indigenous Pillar via direct GLaWAC consultation
 - Is advisory in nature - provides recommendations to GCM for consideration and implementation

Next Steps

- GCM to draft WG Scope and Terms of Reference
- Call for Expressions of Interest via public advertisement

2026 CRG Meeting Dates

Meeting #6 - Thursday 19 February

Meeting #7 - Thursday 14 May

Meeting #8 - Thursday 20 August

Meeting #9 - Thursday 10 December

Q&A

Meeting Wrap Up & Next Steps



John Mitchell
CRG Chairperson