

Fingerboards Critical Minerals Project Community Reference Group (CRG): Meeting Notes

Meeting Information

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| Date: | Thursday, 19 Feb 2026 | Location: | Lindenow South |
| Time: | 11:30AM to 4:30PM AEDT | Independent Chair: | John Mitchell |
| GCM Attendees: | Michelle Wood, Stefan Wolmarans, Allison Heskey, Murray Holland, Kellie Harpley, Mick Harrington (arrived at 1:30pm), Shannon O'Neil | | |
| CRG Member Attendees: | Carolyn Cameron, Graham Watt, Jillian Stewart (retired at 1:20pm), John Alexander (retired at 4:00pm), Joshua Nelson, Lionel Rose, Peter Reefman, Rohan Reynolds, Simon Padfield, Tess Coverdale, Trevor Hancock | | |
| Apologies: | CRG Member Apologies: Alfred Chown, Andrew Sheridan, Cr Geoff Wells (Wellington Shire Council), David Radford (East Gippsland Water), Vesna Rendulic Observer Apologies: Prue McTaggart (EGSC) | | |
| Observers: | Grant Clarke (Resources Victoria), Dave Roberts (RDV) | | |

Agenda Items

Presenter

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| 1. Welcome & Introductions | John (Chair) |
| 2. Apologies | John (Chair) |
| 3. Approval of Previous CRG Minutes (Meeting #5) | All |
| 4. Pecuniary Interest Declaration | All |
| 5. Project Update | Michelle Wood |
| 6. EES Studies Update | Michelle Wood |
| 7. Mine Schedule | Stefan Wolmarans |
| 8. LUNCH | All |
| 9. Mental Health & Wellbeing Local Briefing | Susie Bady |
| 10. Stakeholder Engagement Update & Formation of Community Working Groups | Mick Harrington |
| 11. Q&A | All |
| 12. Confidential Items | All |
| 13. Meeting Wrap Up & Next Steps | John (Chair) |

New Action Items / Decisions Made

1. GCM to circulate the revised CRG meeting schedule (Fridays, 12:00pm start, the day after previously proposed Thursday dates) and seek feedback from members who were absent.
2. GCM to provide earlier confirmation of venue and timing for future meetings and consider CRG venue preferences (Quest Bairnsdale or Lindenow Pub) for location.
3. GCM to implement real-time weather monitoring data on the GCM website.
4. GCM to consider structured progressive publication of EES study updates (clearly identifying completed work, stable findings, and information subject to change).
5. GCM to investigate reports that some properties on the Stratford mail distribution route did not receive letterbox drop materials and circulate mailbox drop materials to the CRG for reference
6. GCM to schedule a CRG site visit to the MRDP prior to public visits (before the next CRG meeting in May).
7. GCM to explore establishing an additional project-related wellbeing support pathway (e.g. dedicated contact point, phone line, or referral mechanism) as a service at no cost to affected community members.
8. GCM to prepare and circulate a one-page visual diagram explaining: Working Groups, CRG Subgroups – how they interact, how they align with the CRG meeting schedule.
9. GCM to establish a three-person selection panel to assist Mick in vetting applications for GCM subgroup membership.
10. GCM to confirm whether the full Redbridge sentiment survey report can be distributed (subject to ownership/confidentiality considerations) and/or invite Redbridge to attend a future CRG meeting to present methodology and findings directly.
11. GCM to circulate presentation slides to CRG members at least one week prior to meetings, provide printed copies at meetings, and structure future agendas with clearly defined sub-agenda items to improve clarity, flow, and ease of reference during discussion.
12. All CRG meetings going forward will include a Microsoft Teams option for CRG members and Project team representatives who are unable to attend in person.

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions (John Mitchell)

The Chair, John Mitchell, opened the sixth meeting of the Community Reference Group (CRG) at 11:30AM and welcomed members and observers.

An Acknowledgement of Country was delivered, recognising the Traditional Owners of the land and paying respect to Elders past and present.

The Chair confirmed that Apologies, Confirmation of Minutes, and Pecuniary Interest Declarations will remain standing agenda items for all future meetings to ensure governance consistency.

2. Apologies (John Mitchell)

Apologies were noted from: Vesna Rendulic; David Radford (East Gippsland Water); Alfred Chown; Prue McTaggart (EGSC); Cr Geoff Wells (Wellington Shire Council); Andrew Sheridan.

3. Approval of Previous CRG Minutes – Meeting #5 (All)

Members were asked whether the minutes were a true and correct record.

LR raised concerns regarding the wording that “CRG members agreed to frequency of future meetings,” stating that he did not recall formal agreement to a change from Friday to Thursday meetings (he recalled dates were simply listed on slides).

A formal motion was moved by LR and seconded by RR to return to third Friday meetings at 12:00pm.

Following discussion, the following was agreed by CRG members and the project team:

- CRG meetings will return to Fridays (one day later than proposed Thursday dates).
- Meetings will commence at 12:00pm and will run for approximately four hours, with lunch to be eaten during the meeting, rather than stopping for a meal.
- Proposed dates will be circulated to absent members for confirmation.
- Earlier notice of venue and timing will be provided.
- Venue preferences raised include Quest and Lindenow Pub.

Shannon/Mick will circulate the revised schedule to seek feedback from absent members.

4. Pecuniary Interest Declaration (All)

The Chair reiterated the importance of declaring pecuniary interests to maintain transparency and an audit trail. It was clarified that this is a cultural and integrity measure within the CRG governance framework, rather than a statutory requirement.

Declarations were made by the following CRG members:

- John Alexander – Leasing land from GCM and holding land under retention licence.
- Tess Coverdale – Now leasing land (previously declared she was applying for lease).
- Jillian Stewart – Providing catering services.

A discussion occurred regarding venue hire arrangements and whether Mick Harrington’s role as President of the local football club constituted a conflict of interest. It was clarified that venue hire fees are paid to the club, not individuals, and no personal financial benefit accrues.

5. Project Update (Michelle Wood)

EES Determination: Michelle advised that on Tuesday, 17 February, the Department of Planning informed GCM that the Project has formally entered the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) process and will require preparation of a full EES.

- MW noted this provides process certainty. GCM had previously written to the Department seeking clarity and timely determination.
- Copies of the Minister’s EES determination letter and accompanying reasons for determination were distributed to members.
- MW thanked the CRG for their comments about the mental health and negative impacts of uncertainty and noted this feedback was passed to Government.

Scoping stage: MW explained that now that Ministerial determination had been made, the next step is scoping – involving identifying potential impacts, and preparing required studies and study scopes, which will then go on public exhibition for 15 business days.

- Scoping timeline: 3-4 months to complete scoping before 15 day public exhibition and comment.
- A question was raised by JN as to whether GCM will rescope entirely, despite Kalbar 2021 EES / previous process; Michelle confirmed yes – the Minister’s decision confirms that GCM’s Project is sufficiently different and requires a new assessment.

Use of historical data: JN asked to what extent data from the previous EES could be relied upon, noting concerns about flawed data in Kalbar's 2021 EES. GCM clarified that it does not intend to rely heavily on earlier data. Baseline monitoring recommenced last year to ensure the integrity and reliability of the current dataset. While historical material may be used to provide context or identify trends, it will not form the foundation of the new EES documentation. GCM further noted:

- Prior information can inform baseline understanding (e.g. used as an input for consultants).
- Some data expires; e.g. ecology – anything older than ~6 years must be reassessed.
- Cultural heritage information can potentially be built upon.
- Underlying historical data remains data; however conclusions and assessments will be new.

EES Timeline – 18 months: MW noted that the EES process is guided by an ambitious 18-month timeframe. Observer Grant Clarke (DEECA) provided further context, explaining that the 18-month timeframe is described as a guideline rather than a guarantee. It originates from the Victorian Government's strategy and applies broadly to all projects undergoing an EES. He also noted that once a project reaches the Minister's desk, the timing of the final decision is at the Minister's discretion and may vary accordingly.

Data transparency and community access to information: JA asked whether the community would receive data and reports progressively throughout the EES process, rather than only at formal exhibition. A further question was raised about whether raw data could be published before consultant analysis, to address concerns about perceived interpretation or skewing.

In response to these questions, it was clarified by GCM that:

- GCM intends to adopt a transparent engagement approach, including hosting "Ask the Expert" forums to enable direct community engagement with technical specialists.
- GCM will confirm which information can be released progressively and which materials must remain within the formal statutory exhibition process.
- Certain datasets – such as weather, air quality and water monitoring data, could potentially be published in raw form at an appropriate stage. It was noted, however, monitoring/sampling for water is conducted quarterly and is not continuous live data.
- It was also noted that impact assessments are interlinked and iterative; therefore, releasing draft conclusions prematurely could create confusion, particularly if project design refinements alter assessment outcomes.
- GCM confirmed it will implement real-time weather monitoring data on the GCM website for public review and transparency.

A communications approach was proposed by CRG member CC, suggesting that information on EES studies be published progressively in a structured format – clearly outlining what is known, what has been completed, what information is considered stable, and what may change. MW acknowledged this suggestion and noted that GCM will consider how such approach could be implemented as the EES progresses.

6. EES Studies Update (Allison Heskey)

GCM provided an overview of progress and next steps across the EES technical workstreams, noting that activity is occurring in two parallel streams:

- Scoping: Development of the formal EES scoping requirements (draft scope to be prepared, released for public and agency comment, and then finalised and published).
- Preparing: Commencement and preparation of technical studies and impact assessments to meet the scoping requirements.

It was noted that once the final scope is published, the impact assessments will be prepared to meet those confirmed requirements.

An update on each study area was presented (refer Slides 14-22 of CRG Meeting #6 Presentation). Key additional discussion points are summarised below.

Ecology, Flora & Fauna: CRG member RR asked how residents can raise specific ecological concerns (e.g. frogs, plant species) to ensure they are considered within the EES studies.

- GCM clarified that community members can contact the project team directly via:
 - contactus@gippslandcriticalminerals.com email address
 - Social media (Facebook or LinkedIn message)
 - Online enquiry form via GCM's website
 - Visiting the project office in person
 - Contacting a team member directly (e.g. Allison or Murray) – contact details are available online.
- GCM confirmed that all concerns raised will be reviewed and, where relevant, incorporated into study scopes.
- It was noted that community-sourced observations have influenced survey programs. As an example, the Giant Burrowing Frog, recorded by a community member during the previous EES process, is being specifically assessed again as part of the current studies.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage: PR asked about cultural heritage requirements, including non-legislative obligations, in the context of the demonstration pit and broader Project. GCM clarified:

- The Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the demonstration pit has been approved by GLaWAC (Registered Aboriginal Party).
- The CHMP includes: defined work area controls; cultural heritage inductions; contingency procedures for unexpected finds.
- Jem Archaeology has now been engaged as the Cultural Heritage Specialist for the overall Project.
- Engagement is commencing with GLaWAC and First Peoples – State Relations.
- Previous cultural heritage assessments are being reviewed by heritage consultants.

GCM outlined three ongoing engagement streams for Aboriginal cultural heritage:

- First Nations community engagement stream (e.g. engagement with GLaWAC);
- Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) statutory stream; and
- Impact assessment stream (includes RAP involvement).

JA asked whether GCM had engaged with the new GLaWAC CEO (Nick Ashburner). MW confirmed that correspondence has been sent to the new CEO regarding the EES announcement.

Visual & Landscape: A question was raised regarding when visual and landscape plans would be “locked down” and whether they could be released publicly once finalised.

- GCM advised that plans will be updated on their website once sufficiently progressed.
- The work remains iterative, with consultant briefs requiring assessment of additional mitigation measures.
- “Locked down” was clarified as reaching a stage of confidence in the design, noting there remains scope for refinement and improvement.

LR noted that the referral indicates the western area will be used for the majority of the mine life and queried whether impacts such as noise and dust could disproportionately affect western receptors. He also commented that there are more dwellings in the west compared to the northern and southern areas and asked whether further design adjustments could occur.

- GCM advised that refinement of design elements in the western area is ongoing, particularly in relation to tailings placement, and that receptor analysis will be undertaken through the EES studies to assess impacts at individual properties.
- It was noted that while this discussion related to visual and landscape impacts, other longer-term impacts will be assessed under their respective study scopes.
- It was also clarified that the “west pit” refers to land west of the Bairnsdale-Fernbank-Glenaladale Road, and that the impact assessment will identify impacts at an individual receptor level.

Receptor Engagement: JA asked how GCM intends to communicate impacts directly to affected receptors.

- MW advised that GCM has undertaken direct engagement activities, including drive-around visits and door-knocking within a 2 km and 5 km radius of the Project area.
- Approximately 70 dwellings are located within 2 km of the Project. Around 30 were initially uncontactable. Following the door-knocking, an additional 10–15 property owners or occupants were identified, and follow-up engagement is ongoing.
- A letterbox drop was also conducted in 2025, targeting households of suburbs within the 5km radius of the Project area. It was raised by CRG members that some properties on the Stratford mail distribution route did not receive the information in the mail. This will be investigated by GCM – MW will circulate the mailbox drop materials to the CRG group for their reference.

Water: GCM clarified that the surface water and groundwater studies are being undertaken in parallel. Water supply and water impact assessments are distinct components, although there is overlap between them.

- JA flagged that a full review of Mitchell River usage (including domestic and irrigative usage) is underway and noted irrigators and other users have recently been asked to complete an online survey as part of the review. JA suggested it would be important for GCM to communicate clearly whether it intends to seek or use water allocations. GCM advised it was aware of the review and that the Project's water strategy will be informed by the outcomes of the surface water and groundwater studies. GCM will consider engagement with the relevant DEECA review process if necessary.

Agriculture & Horticulture: An independent specialist consultant has been engaged to undertake targeted consultation with landholders, agricultural producers, agribusiness operators and representative bodies within and surrounding the Project area. The purpose of the interviews is to understand local production systems, land capability, supply chains, seasonal conditions, potential impacts, and perceived risks and opportunities associated with the Project.

- RR asked whether consultation responses are de-identified before being provided to GCM. GCM clarified that participants are given the option to have GCM present during interviews. To date, all participants have elected to have GCM in attendance. GCM does not receive full interview transcripts; therefore, any awareness of responses is limited to what is heard during the interview itself.
- CC asked how individuals had been selected to participate, and Allison confirmed that invitations to participate have been targeted to provide a broad representative understanding of experiences and views from local and surrounding agricultural and horticultural farmers, producers, processors and representative bodies. Invitations include landholders and producers who are supportive, neutral and opposed to the Project. Participation is voluntary, and the consultant is continuing to seek a representative cross-section of views to avoid bias and ensure the assessment reflects the diversity of perspectives within the agricultural community.
- JA asked whether participation in the consultation had been advertised more broadly, such as through the local newspaper. Allison advised that engagement has so far occurred through direct invitations and advertising has not yet been undertaken. She noted this remains an option, and once the current round of interviews is complete, GCM will review whether the responses represent a sufficiently broad sample and consider broader invitations, including advertising in local media if required.

Studies Yet to Commence/Timing:

- It was noted that the Land Use & Planning and Traffic & Transport studies have not yet commenced.
- The Human Health Impact Assessment will commence later in the process, as it is dependent on findings and modelling outputs from multiple other technical studies, and is therefore expected to be one of the final assessments undertaken.

*** Jillian Stewart retired at 1:20PM; Mick Harrington arrived at 1:30pm*

7. Mine Schedule (Stefan Wolmarans)

Update on mine schedule development

- Stefan advised that a base case mining schedule has been developed as a design starting point to define the proposed pit shape, mining sequence, equipment requirements, and operating assumptions.
- The schedule has been refined over the last two quarters, using preliminary environmental and engineering inputs (including dust, noise, tailings and drainage considerations).
- The team noted the schedule is iterative: changes to one design element (e.g., tailings placement) create flow-on impacts to haulage, equipment, and associated modelling results.

Overview of proposed mining sequence and operations

- The base case shows two mining units operating at any time (with early years potentially operating as a single unit prior to both units running concurrently).
- The proposed sequence broadly involves progressing around the “west” area (described as an anti-clockwise progression), with sequencing designed to:
 - Prioritise the road realignment (mine the road pillar first), enabling the road to be moved and then returned to its original alignment.
 - Later transition towards the eastern areas, with satellite pits mined as part of the overall sequence.
- Stockpiles (shown as lighter-coloured areas) were described as temporary and variable over the mine life, required to maintain sufficient void capacity for tailings and backfilling.
- The team advised the overall sequence is not expected to change substantially from the base-case mine sequence presented – however more refinement is occurring ‘below the surface’, including:
 - Exact tailings placement and prioritisation of rehabilitation areas; and
 - Potential shaping of minor gullies for improved long-term stability where feasible.
- The base case mine life was stated as ~22 years, with discussion noting this sits alongside additional construction and decommissioning periods (i.e., mining operations timeframe does not necessarily represent the full Project timeframe).
 - A question was raised by JN about whether the 22-year mine life is fixed; GCM indicated mine extent is constrained by Project approvals/tenements and the proposed development footprint.

Land tenure and privately owned land: A question was raised by RR about an overlay of land ownership and privately held areas.

- The team confirmed that GCM currently owns ~53% of the Project area, including key infrastructure areas.
- For privately owned land, the approach is negotiation with landholders for access/arrangements, with engagement occurring to varying degrees (including some landholders declining engagement, which the team stated they respect).
- GCM noted there is a formal process for access/compensation and that arrangements are not necessarily limited to simple monetary outcomes (noting alternative models may be used elsewhere, such as swaps or legacy arrangements, depending on circumstances).

Processing / separation plant location:

- A question was raised by JA whether the separation/processing plant is located on company-owned land. The team confirmed it is not on company-owned land, and advised:
 - the preferred location is driven by operational efficiency (central location to reduce haul/pumping distances, standardise equipment, and reduce energy/emissions), and
 - a key consideration is avoiding the need for HMC to cross the road.
- The team advised they are hopeful of reaching agreement with the relevant landowner, and that contingencies exist (alternate locations are possible), but any relocation would require revisiting modelling and demonstrating impacts remain acceptable.

Water allocations: CC asked how much water GCM has secured in terms of its current allocation.

- Michelle clarified that GCM has secured approximately 0.5 GL through the purchase of the Treasures property water licence (50 ML).
- LR queried the reference to a 10 ML amount. Stefan clarified that this relates to the MRDP, which required a temporary transfer of water from irrigation use to commercial use. This involved effectively transferring water from GCM to itself to enable the change of licence category required for the test pit activities.

Water sourcing: Michelle further clarified that GCM is still in the planning stages of securing water supply for the project and expanded on potential sourcing options, noting that:

- As outlined in GCM's EES referral documents, the project is expected to require approximately 3 GL of water per year. GCM is currently undertaking active investigations into several potential supply options, including:
 - recycled water
 - winterfill from existing water licence allocations
 - groundwater from the deep Latrobe aquifer
 - potential surface water sources such as the Mitchell River and the Macalister Irrigation District (MID).
- These options continue to be assessed through the EES process to determine their feasibility and potential environmental impacts.
- However, it was noted that water from the MID is increasingly unlikely to be the preferred option, and GCM is therefore unlikely to continue pursuing investigations into this source.

Recycled water discussion:

- LR asked how recycled water is currently being used in the Bairnsdale area. It was noted that it is primarily used for irrigation and environmental uses such as the Macleod Morass.
- LR further queried how an allocation to GCM might affect the Morass. MW clarified that recycled water distribution operates on a priority basis, and that GCM would need to fit within these priority groups. As a result, it is unlikely the project would receive priority access ahead of existing users such as the Macleod Morass. It was also noted that any potential ecological impacts, would be assessed through the EES process.
- It was noted that the recycled water available is treated wastewater (Class C). Class C water refers to treated wastewater following sewage treatment. However, if the water is disinfected at the treatment plant, it may reach Class B quality by the time it arrives at the project site. To upgrade the water from Class B to Class A, additional secondary treatment would be required on site.

Rehabilitation & closure criteria:

- The team stated confidence that disturbed land can be returned to productive use, and noted the EES process must demonstrate this through expert assessment.
- It was explained that prior to mining, the proponent must provide a rehabilitation bond covering the maximum exposure scenario (described as a significant cash-backed guarantee to government), intended to cover full remediation if the operator were to cease operations at the point of maximum liability.
- LR stated his concerns that that the bond did not ensure successful rehabilitation.
- The team emphasised rehabilitation is not complete simply upon backfilling and reseeding: closure criteria must be met and audited/certified by regulators before a mining area/lease is relinquished and any bond is returned.

8. Lunch

*** Members took a break for lunch from 1:35-2:00PM*

9. Mental Health & Wellbeing Local Briefing (Susie Bady)

At the commencement of the session, CRG members asked whether GCM team members should leave the room for the mental health discussion, noting that sensitive information might be

shared. Some CRG members also raised that they were unsure what the content of the session would involve due to limited information provided in advance.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that GCM staff could remain in the room for the session (agenda item #9). CRG members also indicated a preference to receive detailed agendas and any supporting materials well in advance of meetings to allow sufficient time to prepare. It was further noted that, for topics such as mental health, CRG members would welcome the opportunity to provide input into the design and structure of sessions to ensure they are appropriately targeted and relevant.

Susie Bady (guest speaker) introduced herself and confirmed she works for the Mental Health & Wellbeing Local – East Gippsland, an initiative of the Victorian Department of Health focused on making adult mental health support easier to access across East Gippsland.

Susie noted she was not connected to the project discussion and attended in a wellbeing support capacity only.

Susie outlined that the service provides free, one-on-one mental health support for adults aged 26+ across East Gippsland – key points:

- Support is walk-in and easy to access, with no GP referral required, no diagnosis required, and no Medicare card required. People can simply attend and ask for help.
- Location: the service is based in Bairnsdale next to the library (24 Service Street).
- Outreach: Susie advised the service also provides outreach across East Gippsland for those unable to attend Bairnsdale.
- Scope of support: assistance is available for mental health concerns/psychological distress (including when someone feels “not right”) and substance use/addiction, noting these issues can co-occur.
- Carer support: Susie highlighted there are supports available for carers of people experiencing mental health and/or addiction issues.
- Under 26s: Susie noted Headspace as the relevant service for people aged under 26.

Susie provided brochures/handouts for attendees to share with friends and community members.

GCM also agreed to explore establishing an additional project-related wellbeing support pathway, such as a dedicated contact point (e.g., a “mental health” phone line or referral service) to provide extra support options for any community members experiencing distress associated with project discussions.

*** Two CRG members asked MW to step outside and said they would like this session to conclude as they would like to focus on other things given the time allowed and MW advised Susie accordingly.*

10. Stakeholder Engagement Update & Formation of Community Working Groups (Mick Harrington)

Mick outlined engagement activities since the last meeting, including: Lindenow South drop-in sessions, Stratford high traffic visit, online webinar, agriculture consultant visit.

- Water remains the dominant issue raised at all sessions (source, sustainability, agricultural impacts).
- Opportunities raised in sessions include: local employment and retaining young people, economic diversification, post-mine infrastructure legacy community benefits and grants, and Young Farmers Program interest.

Community engagement activity – community BBQ: Mick raised the idea of hosting a community BBQ as a possible engagement activity and asked whether the group would be open to this approach, noting that some people may perceive providing food as an attempt to “give them something”.

- During the discussion, some GCM team members noted that this type of activity could potentially be viewed negatively. LR indicated disagreement with the proposal, and TH commented that there were already a number of other engagement opportunities available.
- No formal vote or position was taken by the CRG. However, the discussion suggested a general view that the approach may not be appropriate. The item was therefore noted as discussed, with no formal decision made by the group.

Mining & Rehabilitation Demonstration Pit (MRDP) – CRG Site Visit: TC asked whether the CRG could undertake a group visit to the MRDP site. It was noted that CRG members will likely receive questions from their communities about the demonstration pit, and a site visit would support informed discussions and enable members to respond with greater confidence and clarity.

- GCM indicated support for arranging a site visit to the demonstration pit and it was agreed the CRG visit should occur before public visits.
- The visit will be scheduled separately to the next CRG meeting – GCM will confirm timing once there is further progress on site works.
- Indicative timing is early to mid-March – an invitation will be circulated once the date is confirmed.

Upcoming Engagement: Mick outlined upcoming engagement activities, including attendance at the Heyfield Timber Festival, shopping centre visits in Sale and Bairnsdale, a further webinar in April, East Gippsland Field Days, and additional Lindenow South drop-in sessions.

- An Expression of Interest process will be placed on the website for community members to register interest in visiting the MRDP.

Working Groups & CRG Subgroups:

- Four benefit-sharing working groups proposed: Cultural Heritage & First Nations (to be progressed directly with GLaWAC); Local Jobs & Capacity Building; Infrastructure & Legacy; Community Vibrancy (grants/benefits focus).
- Two CRG-only subgroups proposed: Community Engagement & Communications; Technical/Environmental.
- CC asked for clarification as to the difference between the working groups and CRG subgroups. Mick clarified that working groups are broader community benefit-sharing design and recommendation forums (including community members beyond the CRG), whilst CRG subgroups are smaller, CRG-only deep dives into technical or communications matters.
- The Chairman asked what the process would be if working groups receive more expressions of interest than available positions. Discussion indicated a preference for a selection process similar to that used for the CRG (i.e. a small panel approach) to avoid perceptions of GCM selecting members unilaterally/any bias concerns.
- It was agreed that a CRG sub-committee would assist Mick in vetting applications for subgroup membership. Mick will consider applications alongside a three-person selection panel.
- JA asked whether participation in subgroups would require additional time commitments beyond standard CRG meetings. Mick confirmed additional meetings (approximately three per year after convening), noting participation is voluntary.
- CC requested a visual one-page diagram outlining how working groups and CRG subgroups interact and align with the CRG meeting schedule. GCM agreed to provide further clarification material.

*** John Alexander retired at 4:00PM*

11. Q&A (All attendees)

Q: Is there a MFG representative as part of the CRG? – PR

- Members present were asked whether anyone was attending in a representative capacity for MFG, and no one indicated that they were.

- LR confirmed that he is not attending as a representative of MFG and is present in a personal capacity, though he is a member and supporter of MFG.
- While LR may be affiliated with MFG, he does not formally represent the organisation on the CRG.

Q: Has the Government endorsed this Project as part of the critical minerals initiative? It was mentioned in the Bairnsdale Advertiser that the Project was “endorsed.” – PR

- MW clarified that the Project was referenced in the Austrade Critical Minerals Prospectus, which highlights 49 significant mining projects across Australia.
- However, in GCM's own media release, the term “endorsed” was not used, nor was it stated that the Government had formally endorsed the Project.
- MW advised that it was the Bairnsdale Advertiser that used this terminology.

Q: In the previous EES, the IAC noted the rare earths component of the ore body was 0.2%. However, in the Quarterly Report it is referred to as 2%? – PR

- Clarification was provided that the ore body itself is not 2% rare earths as mined. The rare earth mineral content of the ore is 0.2%. Without the exact reference provided as part of the question, the distinction may relate to the difference between the overall ore body composition and the percentage within Heavy Mineral Concentrate (HMC).

Q: Was there a presentation to Committee for Gippsland about property values? – PR

- MW advised that she has never spoken about, or given advice, on property values.
- To GCM's knowledge, there has not been a presentation to the Committee for Gippsland specifically on property values, nor has this topic been formally communicated by anyone at GCM.

Q: Regarding the Redbridge Survey, how were respondents selected, and what questions were asked? – PR

- MW clarified that two key engagement milestones include quarterly focus groups and an annual survey conducted by Redbridge.
- Redbridge independently manages participant selection and survey methodology, and provides GCM with the results. GCM maintains appropriate separation from the process to preserve independence.
- The survey questions and results are available. However, it will need to be confirmed whether the full study can be distributed or whether it is owned by Redbridge. If distributed, the material should be treated by the CRG as confidential.
- It may be beneficial to invite Redbridge to attend a future CRG meeting to explain their methodology directly, and this will be explored for the next meeting.

12. Confidential Items (All attendees)

The Chair advised that ‘Confidential Items’ will be included as a standing agenda item for future meetings to provide clarity for members and avoid confusion regarding what information presented at the meeting, if any, is confidential.

The Project Team confirmed that no items presented or discussed during this meeting were confidential.

13. Meeting Wrap Up & Next Steps (Chair)

The Chair thanked members for their time and contributions, noting the constructive discussion throughout the meeting. Appreciation was extended to the Gippsland Critical Minerals team for organising the session and supporting materials.

The Chair requested that the proposed revised meeting schedule be circulated to all CRG members as soon as possible, including those not present. Absent members will be asked to

confirm whether the revised dates and times are suitable. It was noted that if multiple members indicate conflicts, alternative arrangements may need to be considered.

The possibility of enabling remote attendance via Microsoft Teams for members unable to attend in person was discussed. GCM confirmed that Microsoft Teams access can be made available for future meetings.

The Chair wished all members a safe trip home.

Meeting closed at 4:38PM AEDT
Next meeting scheduled for Friday 15 May 2026, 11:30AM-4:30PM