

Fingerboards Project Newsletter



Good jobs. Stronger Businesses. Real local opportunities.

National Recognition Delivering Real Local Benefits

The past few months have marked a significant period for the new Fingerboards Project, with key milestones confirming it is on the right path and delivering for the region.

Work is now underway on the ground. The Mining and Rehabilitation Demonstration Pit is operational, with more than 20 local contractors engaged and procurement with East Gippsland businesses now exceeding \$1.4 million. Community members can register to visit the Demo Pit and speak directly with our technical team.

In February, the Australian Government awarded Fingerboards Major Project Status, recognising its national significance as a potential global supplier of rare earth elements and zircon, and providing coordinated support as we progress through approvals.

In the same month, the Victorian Minister for Planning confirmed the redesigned project will proceed through an Environment Effects Statement (EES). This recognises what we have said consistently: this is a materially different project from the proposal considered in 2021.

The EES will provide a comprehensive and transparent assessment of our environmental safeguards, updated design and community input. We called for it and we welcome it.

We also made a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries on social licence in the critical minerals sector, setting out practical ways to strengthen early, structured community engagement within existing regulatory frameworks. It's available online in our Virtual Office.

Community input has already shaped the redesigned project, including the 1.5 kilometre buffer to better protect the Lindenow Valley, removal of mining from key gullies, a rail-first logistics strategy, and a diversified water approach. These are fundamental design changes informed by the people who live and work in this region.

Our Jobs Guide, outlining around 700 roles across construction and operations and how locals can access them is now live, you can pick up a copy in person or download one from our website. We also supported our first Community Scholarship recipient into the 2026 Gippsland Community Leadership Program.

The project represents a \$295 million investment in East Gippsland, with an estimated \$90 million annual contribution to the regional economy and more than \$180 million in royalties over its expected 22-year life. At projected production, it is expected to contribute approximately 7.1 per cent of global heavy rare earths DyTb supply and 7.2 per cent of global zircon supply.

There is a long road ahead. The EES process is rigorous, as it should be. But the foundations are strong: a redesigned project, national and state recognition, real work underway, and a community helping to shape how the project develops.

I am always happy to answer your questions, including the difficult ones.

Michelle Wood, CEO



Work Begins at Fingerboards Demo Pit

Work has begun at the Mining and Rehabilitation Demonstration Pit (MRDP) at the Fingerboards Project, following the successful mobilisation and pre-start inspections by local contractors.

Six additional East Gippsland businesses have now joined the works, bringing the total number of local contractors involved to more than 20. Procurement contracts associated with the MRDP have now exceeded \$1.4 million and continue to grow as works progress.

Local businesses contributing to the project include Whelans Group, Riley Earthmoving, Riseley Contracting, Kennards Hire Bairnsdale, East Gippsland Asset Protection and Gibsons Ground Spread, supporting earthworks, fabrication, fencing, equipment hire and site services.

The MRDP was established to enable at scale works and real-world testing of the project's processes and environmental controls, and responds directly to a consistent request raised during the 2021 Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) process: to see rehabilitation demonstrated in practice, not just described in plans.

The demonstration pit is testing the mining, environmental and water management and rehabilitation methods proposed for the redesigned Fingerboards Project under real East Gippsland conditions. The data collected will inform the technical studies currently underway as part of the Environment Effects Statement (EES).

The MRDP has been designed to operate safely within the local environment and sits well above the regional aquifer, with studies confirming our expectation that there will be no interaction with groundwater. Monitoring bores around the MRDP will track groundwater conditions, while collection bores at the base of the pit will capture and test any water to confirm controls are working as designed.

A modular separation plant will process small quantities of ore with separated sands (tailings) consistent with those expected during operations. This will help confirm how water can be recovered, treated and reused within the new system.

Rehabilitation will follow the same sequence proposed for the full project: excavation, backfilling, contouring, soil replacement and revegetation, with the results informing the long-term rehabilitation approach.



“This is important work being delivered by East Gippsland contractors. I’m proud to see this day arrive. More than a million dollars is flowing to local businesses for earthworks, fabrication, technical and site services, and that’s the approach we’ll be taking across the life of the project.”

- Mick Harrington, Community and Stakeholder Lead



Come and see it for yourself

Community members can now register their interest online for guided tours of the Demo Pit.

During the hour-long tours, GCM managers and technical staff will walk visitors through how the pit operates and explain the design and safety features of the project. This includes an overview of the pit layout, the modular separation plant, and how rehabilitation will be carried out.

Visitors will receive a safety induction before entering the site. For safety reasons, all visitors must wear closed-toe shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Children under 14 are not permitted on site. Tour dates and times will be confirmed as works progress.

To register your interest in attending a tour, visit gippslandcriticalminerals.com or call 1800 791 396.

“As the work progresses, we want people to come out and see it for themselves, ask questions and speak directly with the technical teams working on site.”

- Mick Harrington, Community and Stakeholder Lead

Jobs Guide: 700 opportunities for East Gippsland

New guide outlines careers the Fingerboards Project can deliver. We've released a comprehensive Jobs Guide for the Fingerboards Project, outlining the types of roles expected across development, construction and long-term operations.

The guide covers 16 career areas, including mining, environmental management and restoration, logistics and administration. The Fingerboards Project is expected to create around 400 construction jobs and approximately 300 ongoing operational roles, supporting local families, strengthening local businesses and creating long-term careers across the region.

Industry analysis shows that every direct mining job in Victoria can support around 1.4 additional jobs in the surrounding region, and up to seven jobs across a local government area through supply chains and local spending.

Key workforce commitments are outlined, including GCM's Gippsland-First Employment Policy. The policy prioritises people who live in or around East Gippsland and confirms the project will not operate a fly-in fly-out workforce.

“People want to know what this project means for them and their families, and how they can build a good career close to home.”

This guide sets out the types of jobs expected, the qualifications typically required and the pathways people can begin preparing for today.” - Mick Harrington, Community and Stakeholder Lead

Copies of the Jobs Guide are available at the GCM office in Bairnsdale or online at gippslandcriticalminerals.com.





“The opportunity to engage with leaders from across Gippsland will help me better support workforce development and long-term employment pathways in the region.”

Rebecca Morrall, 2026 GCM Community Scholarship recipient

Investing in local leadership

Bairnsdale-based Human Resources Manager Rebecca Morrall has been selected as the recipient of the Gippsland Critical Minerals Community Scholarship for the 2026 Gippsland Community Leadership Program (GCLP).

The scholarship supports the participation of an East Gippslander in GCLP, one of Australia’s longest-running regional leadership programs, which marks its 30th anniversary in 2026. Delivered in partnership with the Committee for Gippsland, the program focuses on building leadership capability, strengthening local networks and supporting collaboration across the region.

Ms Morrall has joined 25 other participants from across Gippsland in the 2026 program, which runs from February to November. Through workshops, group work and practical challenges, participants explore regional issues and build leadership skills.

Rebecca said the program provides an opportunity to learn from leaders working across different sectors in Gippsland.

Come and talk with us

Our engagement program continues across East Gippsland, with a mix of drop-in sessions, high-traffic visits and community meetings where locals can speak directly with the project team.



Upcoming sessions include:

Thursday, 15 May

- Community Reference Group Meeting, 11:00 AM-4:00 PM

Saturday, 6 June

- High-Traffic Visit, Eastwood Shopping Precinct, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Wednesday, 17 June

- Drop-in Session, Lindenow South Recreation Reserve, 5:00-7:00 PM

Wednesday, 17 June

- Webinar (Online), 3:00-4:00 PM

In the coming months, we will also introduce 'Ask an Expert' sessions, giving community members the opportunity to connect directly with project specialists across a range of technical areas. Further details will be shared soon.



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.

