

Fingerboards Project Newsletter

Moving ahead with proof, not promises

More than 200 people came down to site to see our Mining and Rehabilitation Demonstration Pit (MRDP) since work began in April, and I want to thank each of you for taking the time to see our work first hand.

Whether you joined one of the tours or have been keeping an eye on our socials, you will have seen the site move through excavation, ore recovery, and separation using the same gravity-and-water process proposed for the Fingerboards Project.

We are now backfilling the pit and getting ready for the next stage, where we will test and trial 11 different pasture and cover-crop mixes. I look forward to welcoming people back later in the year to see how they are establishing and our rehabilitation work is progressing.

I want to recognise our engineers, mobile plant operators, fitters, piping installers, fabricators and electricians. Also the metallurgical consultants, environmental specialists, agronomists, rehabilitation specialists, and the 20 East Gippsland businesses and suppliers that have delivered the first phase of work to a best-practice standard. It has been a real team effort.

We know many people in the community are looking at the work being delivered at the MRDP by local businesses and starting to think about how they could be involved in the full-scale project if it proceeds. It is encouraging to have already received more than 200 expressions of interest in future jobs and supplier opportunities.

These conversations are important. This includes mapping out the training and development pathways available as we progress towards construction (slated for 2028, if approved).

The broader project is moving into an important next stage of its assessment, with the draft scoping

requirements for the Environment Effects Statement (EES) having been exhibited for public comment. Put simply, the scoping requirements set out what must be investigated and documented through the EES.

To help people understand the range of technical and environmental work ahead, we hosted our first 'Ask the Expert' sessions, giving community members the chance to speak directly with the specialists working across air quality, noise, radiation, surface water, social impact and the overall EES process.

If you didn't get a chance to join the first round of sessions, there will be more as our work progresses. You can also watch a recording of the webinar on our website.

These sessions are just one part of our broader Community Consultation Plan, which sets out how we will keep people informed and involved throughout the EES. The draft plan is available on our website, and I encourage you to have a look and let us know what you think. Your feedback will help shape how we engage with the community as the project moves forward.

We will continue to be out and about and are available at our office in Bairnsdale if you ever want to chat, learn more about the project, and ask questions.

We are committed to a proper process, and our door remains open as we bring this exciting project to life.

Michelle Wood,
CEO



In-pit tailings explained

At the MRDP, ore is mixed with water and passed through spiral separators. Like gold panning, gravity does the work for us, separating the heavier valuable minerals from the surrounding sand and clay.

Once the minerals have been separated, about 95 per cent of the mined material remains. This sand and clay are mixed with water and pumped back into engineered cells within the pit.

As the material settles, water collects in a pond within the pit (the blue water you can see in the photo). A small dose of flocculant commonly used in agriculture helps clarify the water faster so it can be collected, recycled and reused in the separation plant.

What about groundwater?

Tailings do not come into contact with the regional groundwater system, which sits more than 45 metres below the deepest point of the pit.

An underdrainage system beneath the tailings cells and the base of the pit captures remaining water, which is reused on site.

Groundwater monitoring before and during the demonstration program continues to confirm that the pit does not intersect the regional groundwater system.



“In-pit disposal of tailings is recognised as best practice on mineral sands critical minerals projects around the world because it allows rehabilitation to occur progressively and maximises water recycling.”

- Stefan Wolmarans, GCM Project Director



MRDP in Action



Site preparation

The site was cleared and prepared for works, with topsoil and subsoil stripped and stored separately so they can be returned during rehabilitation.



Excavation and ore recovery

The pit was excavated to its full trial dimensions, and the ore was separated using the same gravity and water methods proposed for the Fingerboards Project.



Backfilling underway

Tailings have been returned to the pit and consolidated, allowing overburden to now be progressively placed back over the top as the pit is refilled.

Next up:

Subsoil and topsoil will be replaced before large-scale rehabilitation trials begin, testing 11 pasture and cover-crop mixes.



Demo pit by the numbers

“We said from the start that we wanted people to come down and have a proper look at the progressive mining and rehabilitation methods being trialled at the demo pit. More than 200 people have taken us up on that, seeing the work firsthand, asking questions and speaking directly with the team on site.”

Mick Harrington,
East Gippsland Community and Stakeholder Lead



200+

visitors

27

guided tours

11

pasture and cover-crop mixes to be trialled

95% of material returns to the pit

0 safety or environmental incidents

\$1.4m+

awarded through
local procurement

20

East Gippsland businesses and
suppliers involved

1,000

tonnes of ore
separated





“Wool growing is such a big part of East Gippsland’s identity. We have been pleased to give the program a long-term home and ensure it grows for many years to come.”

Mick Harrington,
Community and Stakeholder Lead

A long-term home for the Gippsland Sheep Breeders Association Trial

GCM was pleased to join local wool growers for the final shearing of the Gippsland Sheep Breeders Association’s three-year wether trial.

The trial brings together Merino bloodlines from across the region and runs them under the same conditions, giving growers valuable information about wool cut, quality and value.

Since relocating to a GCM property, the trial has had more space to grow with a new secure longer-term home. The sheep are healthier and annual wool cuts have increased by an average of around 1.5kg per

head. The next trial will expand from eight growers and six bloodlines to 14 growers representing 11 bloodlines.

GCM is proud to support the Gippsland Sheep Breeders Association and to provide a home where the trial can continue to grow for years to come.

Congratulations to Garry and Kaye Davidson, who placed first in both trial categories, and to all the growers involved.

Come and talk with us



Our engagement program continues across East Gippsland, with a mix of drop-in sessions, pop-up stalls and webinars running alongside the formal EES process.

Upcoming sessions

Wednesday, 9 September - Drop-in Session, Fernbank Hall, 5:00-7:00 PM

Wednesday, 16 September - Pop-up Stall, Eastwood Shopping Precinct, 3:00-5:00 PM

Check out our new 'ways to engage' page on the GCM website for more session dates



Missed our first Ask the Expert sessions?



You can watch the recorded webinar on our website and hear directly from the specialists undertaking studies for the EES.

The first round included:

- **EES process and studies program:** Bryan Chadwick, Justin Scicluna and Natasha Neradil, AECOM
- **Radiation:** Darren Billingsley, DBH Radiation
- **Air quality:** David Rollings, AECOM
- **Surface water:** Ben Hughes, Water Technology
- **Social impact:** Glenn Weston, Public Place
- **Noise:** George Rowe, AECOM

A further round of Ask the Expert sessions is planned for later in the year.

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.

