

Councillors 'well aware' of mine processes

East Gippsland Shire councillors are "well aware" of their role in decision making regarding the future of Kalbar Resources' mineral sand project proposed for the Fingerboards.

Martin Richardson, on behalf of Kalbar Resources, posed two questions to councillors at Tuesday's ordinary council meeting regarding the decision making process, concerned that decisions may be made prematurely, before appropriate reports are tabled. The questions followed the attempt by Cr John White, at the request of the East Gippsland Community Action Group, to table a motion opposing the mine at the meeting, which was ultimately not pursued, as reported in Monday's *Advertiser*.

"Is the council aware that the Fingerboards mineral sands project is yet to be assessed as part of a comprehensive environmental effects statement in accordance with state and commonwealth legislation and that council cannot make a formal decision

on the project until the Minister for Planning's decision on the environmental effects statement?" Mr Richardson asked.

"Quite simply, yes," mayor, Cr Joe Rettino, said.

Mr Richardson also asked, "Given the obligation of councillors under the *Local Government Act* and Councillor Code of Conduct, in addition to the principles of unbiased decision making and natural justice, is it the case that any resolution adopted by council on the Fingerboards mineral sands project prior to the completion of the environmental effects statement would be inappropriate and potentially damaging to the integrity of any future statutory decisions by council on the project?"

Again, Cr Rettino's response was succinct – "Councillors are well aware of their obligations".

Jeanette Wagner, of Paynesville, who is secretary of the East Gippsland Community Action Group formed after the most recent council

election, also questioned councillors over the project.

Knowing councillors were looking to visit other mining sites around the state, Ms Wagner asked where and when the visits would take place.

"The Fingerboards mineral sands mining project is unique to Victoria as it will be located among our pristine, clean, green vegetable and farming district, heritage river, water supply and RAMSAR wetlands," she said.

"Will your tour include an equivalent location?"

"We are finalising our itineraries and locations," Cr Rettino said.

"At this stage we are looking at travelling in January.

"We'll be wanting to get the best knowledge we can from the things that we look at and of course we need it to be relevant to what we are looking at."

Ms Wagner asked if councillors Reeves, White, Roberts, Toohey and O'Connell had a change of opinion regarding the mine as during election

campaigning they had indicated non-support for the mine, despite Cr John White reporting only having one other councillor in support of his attempted notice of motion regarding the project.

Those councillors mentioned by Ms Wagner had varying degrees of commentary, or opposition, about the mine pre-election, with Crs O'Connell, Pelz and Toohey saying they would support or

request an EES in a survey conducted by Mine Free Glenaladale.

Cr Rettino said it was inappropriate for him to answer regarding the opinions of other councillors.