



02<sup>nd</sup> December 2025

Dear Sandra and Tarras residents,

Thank you for your letter and for taking the time to share your questions and concerns about the proposed Bendigo–Ophir Gold Project.

Since your letter was sent, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has completed its checks, and the full fast-track application including the technical assessments on water, traffic, noise, landscape, heritage, and other effects is now publicly available on the [Fast-Track website](#). Our responses below draw on those reports and the supporting information submitted.

### **Community engagement**

Santana has been meeting with residents along Bendigo Loop Road, Thomson Gorge Road, Ardgour Road and in Tarras since early 2024, including the formation of a Community Liaison Group, of which an open invitation remains to Thomson Gorge Road residents. We have also held 19 drop-in sessions in Tarras. We acknowledge that some residents still feel unheard, and we remain open to ongoing dialogue. The technical reports use defined terms like “adjacent community” for effects assessment, but that does not limit who can ask questions or engage with us.

### **Accommodation and workforce**

The project model prioritises people who already live in Central Otago, along with local contractors. A short-term, 20-site caravan facility and 80-person construction camp on Ardgour Flats are proposed only for contractors who cannot reasonably commute during intensive work periods. It would be managed under strict policies covering behaviour, security, and drug and alcohol standards to minimise any off-site impacts. We have advanced discussions in nearby communities to utilise existing underutilised accommodation options to support the construction workforce.

Our resource consent application for the construction camp was submitted as non-notified in line with the advice we received from our planners based on other equivalent consents. This has since been withdrawn and is included in the fast-track consent.

### **Property values, local businesses, tourism and primary production**

The application includes assessments of amenity and economic effects. To date, no independent evidence has been provided to show that property values in Tarras or along Thomson Gorge Road have fallen, potential exists for property value growth from continued population growth across Central Otago. Concerns from businesses are noted, but at this stage they remain unsubstantiated by formal data.

### **Landscape, visual, heritage and recreation**

Independent specialists have assessed landscape, visual and heritage effects. The mine layout will sit outside key heritage precincts and historic mining remnants, with most operational features located in terrain partly screened by natural ridgelines. Visual simulations in the application show current views, views during operations, and post-closure rehabilitation, so people can see how the site will look over time. The Come In Time stamper battery will remain accessible but by a longer walking route accessible via the Bendigo Historic Reserve. Any temporary access restrictions needed for safety would be short-term, notified in advance, and managed to retain alternative access where practicable.

### **Traffic, roads and safety**

Qualified transport engineers have modelled traffic volumes, including heavy vehicles. Their analysis shows that projected traffic levels remain within the capacity of the network when combined with recommended road safety measures. Waka Kotahi has reviewed the SH8/Lindis River Bridge–Ardgour Road intersection and confirmed that, with the planned safety upgrades, it can safely accommodate the increase in activity. Santana has requested reduced speed limits on Thomson Gorge Road through CODC and will seal the road in front of residences, as well as enforce lower speed expectations at 60km/hr for company and contractor vehicles.

### **Noise, light, and dust**

Dust levels were monitored at Lake Clearwater (since Feb 23), Come In Time North (since Dec 24), Ardgour Flats, Come In Time Battery, Come in Time Valley, and RAS (Since Sept 24) and these sites continue to be monitored. From this we found that in winter and spring dust levels were similar to other rural areas. In summer the highest dust levels occurred naturally due to dry conditions, which is typical for Central Otago. Dust usually settles close to where it's created. At the highest likely windspeeds mine dust is unlikely to travel more than 250 – 300 m, and we'll maintain buffer zones of at least 500 metres between large scale mine earthworks and homes or sensitive areas. The nearest residence to the proposed mine is substantially further than 500m away. Mitigation and monitoring will be in place and with these controls, air quality effects will be negligible and well within health and environmental standards.

Lighting at the BOGP will comply with all District Plan requirements, including limiting light spill to no more than 10 lux (Twilight) on neighbouring properties and roads, with additional mitigation measures secured through consent conditions. While the mine sits well outside and over the horizon from the proposed Naseby Dark Sky Reserve, its principles have still guided our lighting design.

Mining activities such as construction, drilling, blasting, and machinery operation will generate some noise and vibration, but all levels will meet the requirements of the Central Otago District Plan and relevant standards. Natural terrain and the distance between the mine and neighbouring homes help to keep noise low. Blasts will occur at set times, last only a few seconds, and typically remain under 115 dB, with occasional peaks up to 120 dB—similar to the brief sound of a chainsaw or ambulance siren. Construction noise at 500 metres is expected to range between 26–56 dB, and vehicle noise along Ardgour and Thomson Gorge Roads will stay below 54 dB, which is within World Health Organisation guidelines. Recreational users of Thomson Gorge Road may notice short periods of noise, generally under 50 dB. We will monitor noise and vibration regularly, report results to the Central Otago District Council and respond promptly to any concerns.

### **Hazardous substances and emergency response**

Any hazardous substances used by the project, including cyanide for gold processing, are subject to strict national rules under the HSNO regime and WorkSafe oversight. Our hazardous substances storage facilities must meet certified design and operating standards. Emergency planning assumes incidents are managed by trained site response teams and specialist hazardous-substances support, with Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) in a lead role as required. Response arrangements do not rely solely on a local volunteer brigade.

### **Water, bores and the Bendigo Aquifer**

Hydrogeological assessments submitted with the application show that the Bendigo Aquifer is large. Modelling indicates that predicted drawdown at nearby bores is less than 1 metre, which is small compared to normal seasonal fluctuations, and that there will be no impact on existing water users. Our take is equivalent to a medium irrigation consent in Central Otago and is well within sustainable limits of the aquifer.

Mine water will not be discharged to the aquifer. To protect surface and groundwater quality, diversion drains will be constructed around the site to ensure clean water remains separated from mine-impacted water. All mine-impacted water will remain within a closed water circuit, and pumped back to the process plant for reuse. Seepage water from the Engineered Landform (ELF) and Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) will be recirculated to the processing plant. Clean water will only be discharged once confirmed to meet compliance standards. Ongoing compliance monitoring of groundwater will take place and surface water will need to stay within the environmental limits.

### **Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) design and safety**

The TSF has been designed in accordance with the New Zealand Dam Safety Guidelines and is engineered to withstand extreme events, including a 1-in-10,000-year earthquake. It is buttressed by a large, engineered landform (ELF) constructed from rockfill, providing additional stability. The embankment design has concluded there is no credible failure mechanism once the ELF is in place. The TSF will operate as a contained, zero-release system during mining, with seepage collection and monitoring in place. Cyanide is broken down in the processing plant before tailings reach the TSF. The destruction circuit reduces cyanide to approximately 0.35 mg/L, which is lower than the New Zealand Drinking Water Standard of 0.6 mg/L. Cyanide does not accumulate in the environment and breaks down quickly. At closure the TSF is capped with rock and soil, shaped to blend with the landscape, revegetated, and integrated with a wetland outlet. Long-term water treatment and monitoring will be in place post closure until closure conditions are attained and certified by Council.

### **Financial bond and regulatory oversight**

A rehabilitation bond, calculated by independent experts and reviewed annually, is required to cover the full cost of closure and rehabilitation, should the company be unable to carry out the work. The project is subject to oversight by the EPA, expert technical reviewers, WorkSafe, local councils and other regulators. These bodies are independent decision-makers; their role is to test the evidence and impose conditions, not to advocate for the project.

**Economic and social contribution**

The application sets out expected economic impacts including local contracting opportunities, long-term jobs in Central Otago (including Tarras), additional spending in local businesses, and increased revenue to council and community organisations. Over the past year we have held 58 community sessions across Cromwell, Alexandra, Wānaka and Tarras, speaking with more than 750 locals. Of those who chose to provide feedback at these events, around 89% indicated support for the project progressing. We recognise, however, that not everyone supports the project, and those views are also important.

We remain committed to respectful, evidence-based engagement. If any resident or business would like to discuss specific concerns, or if you would like help locating particular reports on the Fast-Track website, please contact us directly and we will do our best to assist.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Spring', written over a horizontal line.

Damian Spring  
CEO, Santana Minerals Limited