Holger Reinecke & Chantal Degril
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10th April 2026

Comments on Bendigo gold mine fast track application

My partner, Chantal Degril, and I have owned the property at [redacted], Ardgour Valley since 1999. We developed the land into a small vineyard/wine business and built a home in 2002. We have lived in that home permanently since its construction.

In 2023 we subdivided part of our property and the new owners built and have lived on that section since 2024.

In 2025 we obtained resource consent for another subdivision of the remainder of our property.

In 2000 we were granted a water permit for irrigation and domestic water usage from a bore located on our property. The water is pumped from a depth of 20m from the Lindis River aquifer. The water has been tested numerous times and is safe for potable water usage. Currently, it is used as such by the owners of nos. 6 and 10 Thomson Gorge Road, and will be made available for the new owners of our current subdivision which includes a consented building platform, hence again domestic and irrigation water usage.

1. Environmental impact

Our main concern about the proposed gold mine is the safety of the planned storage/tailings dam and its potential failure and associated environmental, especially ground water contamination.
In the over 20 years of residence in the Ardgour Valley we have experienced numerous earthquakes, some in the mountains where the proposed mine and tailings dam will be located. Given the nature of seismic activity in New Zealand in general, and along known fault lines

in particular, we do not think the risk of failure of such a dam due to a major earthquake can be excluded.
Furthermore, inevitable man made rock blasting/explosions during mine operations could trigger seismic activities, or make them more likely in the future due to the vibrations and geological disruptions. We do not believe such consequences could possibly be excluded or prevented.
A catastrophic tailings dam destruction would mean immediate flooding and contamination of lower lying areas and waterways. Minor damage might lead to underground seepage which could remain unknown and also negatively impact water quality.
No study could exclude an earthquake able to cause the failure of a tailings dam, simply because such seismic activity must be regarded as a known unknown, or an unknown unknown event (see the Christchurch earthquakes!).
Finally, the tailings dam with its associated chemical legacy will be in situ for many generations after the gold mining has ceased. Whose responsibility will it be to monitor and safeguard the dam into the future for hundreds or thousands of years, and who will pay for it?

2. Economic impact

Apart from any future risk of the proposed gold mine, the immediate impact on our property and lives stems from a sudden drop in property values along Thomson Gorge Road and in the Ardgour Valley. Ever since the mine's fast track application has been lodged, interest in property purchases and values have dropped dramatically. Potential buyers cite the degradation of lifestyle values in a rural area through increased noise and pollution, and the risk of more devaluation of properties for future sales.

3. General comment

More generally, the “need” for more gold as a commodity can be argued about. However, if such a “need” exists one should also take into account one of gold’s beautiful and indisputable properties - its infinite recyclability!
According to the applicant’s submitted data, the proposed mine would yield 3 grams of gold per tonne of rock extracted from the ground.
In comparison, New Zealand alone produces about 100,000 tonnes of electronic waste (e-waste) each year, of which only 2% is recycled, and the majority ends up in landfills.
Apart from non ferrous and other precious metals, e-waste also contains gold of up to 300 grams per tonne (hence vastly more than a tonne of rock from the Bendigo hills).
Should the “need” for more gold really exist, then efforts and investment in recycling and “mining” of gold (and other metals) from e-waste would not only easily meet those “needs” quantitatively, but at the same time deliver undeniably greater economic, cultural and environmental benefits than the disruption of a geological ecosystem that has been created by the forces of nature over millions of years, and well before human beings and their “needs” for gold came into existence.

Holger Reinecke & Chantal Degril,
Tarras, 9th April 2026.

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