

13 November 2025

Environmental Protection Authority  
366 Lambton Quay  
Wellington 6011  
New Zealand

By Email: [contact@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:contact@fasttrack.govt.nz)

Tēnā koutou,

**RE: BENDIGO\_OPHIR GOLD PROJECT - FAST TRACK APPROVALS ACT 2024**

We are writing as a collective group of winegrowers from the Bendigo subregion of Central Otago, representing approximately 25% of the total vineyard area in the Central Otago region. We are writing to express our concern in relation to the Bendigo–Ophir Gold Project currently submitted under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA).

Given the project’s proximity to our vineyards, our shared water sources, and the use of the Bendigo name, we are directly affected parties in the Bendigo–Ophir Gold Project. We therefore request the opportunity to collectively present our industry’s concerns as appropriate under the FTAA.

Most of our vineyards lie within a 10-kilometre radius of the proposed site, and many are certified organic. In just three decades, the Bendigo subregion has earned an international reputation for producing some of New Zealand’s most highly regarded wines. The “Bendigo” name now carries a premium association with quality, sustainability, and place — an asset we are committed to protecting and enhancing.

We are writing to formally confirm our interest and request that the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) take steps to ensure that our involvement in the fast-track process is commensurate with the scale and significance of the impacts on our land.

Our immediate concerns regarding the proposed project are outlined below.

**1. Reputational damage to wine and tourism markets**

The reputation of Bendigo wines forms part of the broader global image of New Zealand wine — sustainably grown in one of the world’s most beautiful landscapes. Central Otago is recognised internationally as one of the most picturesque wine regions to visit, and together with Queenstown, it is often a key driver of international tourism.

The scale and potential effects of this project risk significant damage to both New Zealand’s visitor economy and global perceptions of our wine and tourism industries. The applicant’s Rise and Shine Mining Permit covers 3,265 hectares at Bendigo — an area larger than the total vineyard area of all Central Otago (2,163 hectares).

Our industry is deeply interconnected. Many Bendigo producers also operate across multiple wine regions and countries, weaving the Bendigo name into global portfolios. Locally, the Bendigo subregion features prominently

in Queenstown’s hospitality and tourism experiences — from wine lists to cellar-door visits — reinforcing its reputation for excellence.

## **2. Water availability and contamination risks**

Many of our vineyards rely on the same aquifers the applicant intends to draw from extensively for dust suppression and processing operations involving cyanide. A reliable supply of clean water is critical for irrigation, frost protection, and potable use.

Any contamination — particularly by arsenic or cyanide — would threaten our organic and sustainable certifications, cause severe reputational harm, and likely restrict export access to key international markets. Even a perceived risk of contamination could have lasting economic consequences.

## **3. Airborne contaminants**

Gold extraction through rock crushing releases arsenic, which can become airborne and pose serious long-term risks to human, animal, and plant health. Given our region’s dry, windy conditions and the growing impacts of climate change, we are concerned that full control of dust emissions over the mine’s lifespan is not feasible. Any contamination would again jeopardise our ability to export and maintain consumer confidence.

## **4. Labour force and accommodation pressures**

Like our colleagues in horticulture, we face ongoing challenges attracting and housing seasonal and permanent workers. The scale of the proposed project and its associated workforce demand would likely intensify pressure on already limited accommodation and labour markets, driving up costs and further straining local businesses.

## **5. Investor confidence and future industry growth**

If the project proceeds, we anticipate reduced investment confidence in both the export and tourism sectors — industries widely seen as incompatible with large-scale mining. Should the applicant seek to expand within its 21,896-hectare Minerals Exploration Permit area, this effect would deepen, undermining long-term growth prospects for wine, tourism, and related regional economies.

The risks posed by this project are not limited to our subregion but extend to the credibility of New Zealand’s broader wine and tourism brands. We formally request to be heard as affected parties.

Nāku noa, nā

Bendigo Central Otago Winegrowers  
c/o Rudi Bauer



**Signatories:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Rudi Bauer	Winemaker	Quartz Reef Vineyard	[REDACTED]
Christopher Keys	Winemaker	Gibbston Valley Wines Ltd	[REDACTED]
Stephen Bradley	Head of Viticulture NZ	Constellation Brands New Zealand Ltd	[REDACTED]
Paul Pujol	Winemaker / GM	Prophet's Rock Wines Ltd	[REDACTED]
Greg Lane	Chief Winemaker	Mt Difficulty, Foley Wines Limited	[REDACTED]
Kim and Erica Crawford	Owners	Loveblock Farms Ltd	[REDACTED]
Alan Peters- Oswald	Winemaker	Nanny Goat Vineyard	[REDACTED]
Domenic Mondillo	Owner	Mondillo Vineyards Ltd	[REDACTED]
Nicola, Timothy and Mathew Kerruish	Owner	Folding Hill Wine Company Ltd	[REDACTED]
Chad Douglas	Viticulturist	Estate Vineyard Management	[REDACTED]

Rosa Melrose	Owner	Blue Mines Ltd	[REDACTED]
Tom Hutchison	Owner	Rockferry Wines / Fishtail Vineyards Ltd	[REDACTED]
Rob van der Mark	Owner	Ariosa Wines	[REDACTED]
Jennifer & Richard Carnachan	Owners	Rocha Terrace	[REDACTED]
Andrew Rickard	Director	Rickard Vineyard	[REDACTED]
Donald Van Der Westhuizen	Winemaker	Moko Hills Vineyard	[REDACTED]
Andy Wilkinson	Director	Misha's Vineyard Wines Limited	[REDACTED]
Misha Wilkinson	Director	Misha's Vineyard Wines Limited	[REDACTED]
Jason Thomson	Viticulturist	Penrith Holdings Ltd	[REDACTED]
Timbo Deaker	Viticulturist	Penrith Holdings Ltd	[REDACTED]
Dr. Marilyn Duxson	Co-Owner	Māori Point Wines	[REDACTED]
Grant Taylor	Owner	Valli Wine	[REDACTED]
Jen Parr	Winemaker	Valli Wine	[REDACTED]

