

8 April 2026

Ref: OIA 26045

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

I refer to your request for official information received on 12 March 2026:

I am writing in regard the announcement that Sustainable Tarras, an anti-mine supporters group have been given permission to make a submission to the panel hearing the Santana mine fast track application.

I would like to obtain information on how the panel or fast track team came to this decision.

I would also be grateful for the correspondence from Sustainable Tarras seeking permission to submit to the panel.

On 7 April 2026, the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) Fast-track team transferred your request to the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Fast-track Project Expert Panel (the Panel) under s14(b)(ii) of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), as the information is more closely connected to the Panel's functions.

The EPA's Fast-track team administers the Fast-track website, the application portal, and the substantive application process. The team provides administrative and secretariat support to the panel convener and expert panels, who make all decisions relating to substantive applications. Accordingly, expert panels decide which parties are invited to comment on the application under section 53 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA).

On 2 June 2025, Sustainable Tarras wrote to the Panel Convenor, requesting to be invited by the Panel to comment on the substantive application. Sustainable Tarras also wrote to the Panel on 25 February 2026, requesting to be invited to comment on the application. Both letters can be viewed on the Fast-track website: [Final Sustainable Tarras](#).

Section 53(3) of the FTAA authorises expert panels to invite comments from any parties they consider appropriate. The Panel considered that several parties represent interests that may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposal, or otherwise hold a legitimate interest in the environmental, economic, or community outcomes relevant to the assessment.

On 11 March 2026, the Panel released Minute 3 recording their decision on which parties were to be invited to comment on the project's application. You can view the minute on the Fast-track website: [Panel minute - invite to comment](#)

As the information you have requested is publicly available on the Fast-track website, we are refusing your request under section 18(d) of the OIA.

I hope this information is helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision under section 28(3) of the OIA. You can contact the Ombudsman on 0800 802 602, or by email at [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz)

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via [uia@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:uia@fasttrack.govt.nz).

We may publish your request and our response on the Fast-track website, [www.fasttrack.govt.nz](http://www.fasttrack.govt.nz). We make OIA responses available so others can read more about the work we do and the questions we are asked. Any information that might identify you will be removed to protect your privacy.

Nāku noa nā



Hon Matthew Muir KC  
**Bendigo-Ophir Gold Fast-track Project Expert Panel Chair**