

SUBMISSION ON THE BARRYTOWN MINERALS PROJECT

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 — Southern Block Substantive Application (Tāiko Critical Minerals Limited)

Submitted by: Colin Robertson, [REDACTED]

To the Expert Panel,

I write in opposition to the substantive application by Tāiko Critical Minerals Limited (formerly TiGa Minerals and Metals, formerly Barrytown JV Ltd) to mine and process mineral sands on the Southern Block of the Barrytown Flats.

I did not come here to oppose a mine. I came here to live.

I own and live on 4 hectares of land immediately adjoining virgin podocarp forest of the highest ecological value, home also to rare fernbirds, kiwi and one of the best examples of intact lowland podocarp forest.

I came for the silence that is not an absence but a presence: the low wind through kahikatea, the call of kiwi after dark, the smell of damp podocarp humus that has never been broken by a blade. I came for the last, best example of what this coast once was, and I built gently upon it — a vegetable garden, a cabin that asked permission of the land rather than demanding it. I felled nothing. I cleared nothing. For five years I have been a custodian, not an owner. My cabin sits less than 20 metres from the boundary of the proposed mine site. This submission is made as a directly and severely affected neighbouring occupier.

My health, wellbeing and enjoyment of my property is the heart of my objection. I did not choose to live beside an industrial mine site — I chose to live beside native forest, in quiet, and in safety. That choice, and the home I have built around it, is now under direct threat. I am told the mine will come to my boundary: that the hum of the forest will be replaced by the thunder of machinery, that the dark sky I sleep beneath will be lit by floodlights, that the air I breathe will carry radon and silica dust, that the ground beneath my feet will vibrate with extraction.

At a distance of less than 20 metres, my property will not experience 'effects' of this mine in the abstract sense used in planning documents — I will live inside its noise, dust, vibration and light footprint. Heavy earthmoving equipment, water-based ore processing, and continuous truck movements will be audible and disruptive from the moment operations begin each day. The World Health Organization identifies sustained noise above 55 decibels as causing serious community annoyance, and above this level regards it as a genuine health hazard, contributing to sleep disruption, chronic stress and cardiovascular harm. Given my proximity, noise from continuous earthworks, pumps, screening plant and truck movements will foreseeably and repeatedly exceed this threshold at my dwelling.

Beyond noise, the constant presence of heavy machinery and truck traffic at my boundary will fundamentally alter my ability to use and enjoy my own land — to sit outside, sleep with

windows open, garden, or simply experience the peace that drew me to this property. What I know is this: the place I moved to is about to be taken from me, not by force, but by permission. The law calls this a 'resource consent.' I call it the end of the only home I have ever chosen. My health, safety and dignity as a resident cannot be treated as a secondary consideration to the commercial interests of an applicant with no operating mine anywhere in New Zealand with no operating history or evidence of competency anywhere.

Radiological risk

The peer-reviewed study by Bradley, Smith and Chouinard (New Zealand Journal of Geology and Geophysics, 2026) confirms that Barrytown heavy mineral concentrate contains monazite and uranothorite bearing thorium and uranium, and that in-situ alteration is actively releasing radon into the environment. Magnetically concentrated fractions reach up to 77.5 Bq/gm — nearly eight times the Radiation Safety Act 2016 threshold of 10 Bq/gm for declaring material radioactive — and radon readings at nearby residences already exceed both the WHO reference level and levels recorded elsewhere in New Zealand. Disturbing, excavating, stockpiling and processing this material at scale, metres from occupied dwellings, self-evidently increases the risk of radon exposure and airborne radionuclide release to neighbouring residents including myself.

Section 57 of the Crown Minerals Act 1991 withholds authorisation for mining that is likely to have a prejudicial effect on the use and enjoyment of neighbouring land by its owner or occupier. Section 55(2) of the same Act separately singles out land within 30 metres of a dwelling, land adjoining indigenous forest, and landholdings of 4.05 hectares or less as categories warranting specific protection from imposed mining access. My property falls squarely within the description these provisions were designed to protect — a small, forest-adjoining landholding with a dwelling metres from the proposed works.

My use and enjoyment is not an abstract planning concept. It is the knowledge that the forest behind my house is older than the law that now threatens it. Parliament's clear intent, reflected across this legislation, is that the enjoyment, health and safety of adjoining occupiers is not to be sacrificed lightly to mineral extraction.

This is not a new or untested proposal. Mining at Barrytown Flats has been sought, examined and declined before: the original Barrytown JV Ltd application was rejected by the Grey District and West Coast Regional Councils in February 2022 for inadequate information on hydrological, water quality and ecological effects, and for unacceptable risk to the Westland petrel (tāiko). A revised application under the renamed TiGa Minerals and Metals was only narrowly granted in 2024, and remains under appeal and subject to ongoing mediation. The applicant, now rebranded again as Tāiko Critical Minerals Limited, is a newly listed, pre-revenue company with no operating mine anywhere in New Zealand, seeking to apply an extraction process that is itself relatively untried in this country. A project with this record of repeated refusal, rebranding and unresolved effects should not now be waved through on an accelerated fast-track process that curtails the very scrutiny that has twice found it wanting.

The Environmental Court has recognised that loss of 'sense of place' is a real and measurable harm. Psychologists use the term solastalgia, coined by the philosopher Glenn Albrecht, for the distress of remaining in a home environment while it is degraded and transformed beyond recognition around you. I will not have to move to lose this place. I will simply have to stay and watch it disappear.

What is proposed at Barrytown is not new in kind, only in scale and machinery. Literature has returned again and again to the wound left when land is opened for extraction and profit is set above the people who live closest to it.

Wordsworth opened his sonnet on industrial appetite with the charge that “the world is too much with us; late and soon” — getting and spending until we lose the very capacity to notice what is being destroyed.

Aldo Leopold, in *A Sand County Almanac*, traced the same fault line, observing that “we abuse land because we regard it as a commodity” rather than a community to which we belong. Thoreau put the opposite case as plainly: “in wildness is the preservation of the world.”

Māori tradition holds a version of the same truth in the whakataukī toitū te whenua, whitiānga tangata — the land endures, it is people who come and go — a reminder that a landholder's tenure is temporary but the harm done to whenua within that tenure is not.

Each of these voices, in its own language and century, makes the claim I am making now: that turning a living place into a resource to be extracted carries a cost measured in more than dollars — in sleep, in health, in the slow erosion of spirit that comes from watching a place you love be taken apart around you. The mind that is kept awake by machinery, the lungs that carry dust and radon, the sense of safety that dissolves at a boundary fence — these are not abstractions. They are the physical, psychological and spiritual toll of greed mistaking a home for a resource.

I ask the Panel to remember that behind every Bq/m³ and every decibel reading, there is a person for whom this is not a 'site' or a 'block' or an 'application.' It is home. It is the place I chose. And it is the place I will lose.

I respectfully ask the Panel to decline this application, or, at minimum, to require an independently verified, site-specific noise and radiological assessment addressing effects at my boundary before any approval is contemplated. My health, safety, dignity and enjoyment of my own property must not be treated as an acceptable cost of this venture.

I wish to be heard in support of this submission.

Yours faithfully,

Colin Robertson

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