

REC'D 15/4

# HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

## Submission cover sheet

Post your submission with this cover sheet to:

Submissions Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry  
PO Box 3460  
GIPPSLAND MC Vic 3841

Email your submission with this cover sheet to [info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au).

Title: <b>MR.</b>	First Name: <b>BRIEN.</b>	Surname: <b>FLINT.</b>
Organisation represented(if applicable): <b>N/A.</b>		
Email address:	<b>N/A.</b>	
Postal address:	<b>MORWELL VICT. 3840.</b>	
Telephone:		Mobile:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Application and administration of regulatory regimes <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		Response to fire by: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazelwood Coal Mine <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Agencies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies

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I acknowledge that my submission will be treated as a public document and may be published, quoted or summarised by the Inquiry.

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## Acknowledgements

### I understand that:

- I can be contacted by the Inquiry in relation to my submission.
- Anonymous submission will not be accepted.
- The name or work or suburb of each submitter will be identified as part of every published submission. Other contact details will be removed before publishing.
- The Inquiry will not publish submission, if it believes that the submission material is or could be defamatory, offensive, contravenes, anti-discrimination or anti-vilification legislation or is outside the scope of the Inquiry's terms of reference

Signature Brian C. Hunt.

OR if sending electronically please confirm your acknowledgment by ticking by box

Date 10.04.14.

## OPENING STATEMENT:

LATROBE CITY DIFFERS VASTLY FROM OTHER REGIONAL CITIES SUCH AS GEELONG, BENDIGO, BALLARAT AND ALBURY-WODONGA.

THIS AREA IS PRIMARILY, A INDUSTRIAL AND FARMING REGION, BUT ALSO BOASTS 3 OPEN CUT MINES TO SERVICE THE POWER INDUSTRY.

ANOTHER LARGE BUSINESS IS THE AUSTRALIAN PULP MILL WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY A NUMBER OF HARDWOOD AND SOFTWOOD PLANTATIONS.

THIS I BELIEVE, SETS IT APART FROM THOSE MENTIONED ABOVE. IT ALSO REQUIRES A DIFFERENT PLANNING APPROACH. ONE WHICH IS SPECIFIC AND MEETS ITS SPECIAL NEEDS.

FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE PAID LIP SERVICE TO THIS DISTINCTION, BUT FAILED TO IMPLEMENT AN APPROPRIATE PLANNING STRATEGY.

THIS HAS RESULTED IN RESIDENTS BEING EXPOSED TO MANY RISKS INCLUDING:

- ECONOMIC.
- HEALTH.
- FIRE
- FLOOD. (TO NAME A FEW.)

ONGOING NEGLIGENCE OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS BY ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR AGENCIES, HAVE RESULTED IN A FLOW OF RECENT DISASTERS.

EG. THE CLOSURE OF THE PRINCES HIGHWAY,

- 2 MAJOR FIRES - ONE RESULTING IN MULTIPLE DEATHS,
- YALLOURN OPEN CUT MINE FLOODED TWICE,
- ONGOING DECLINE IN ECONOMIC VIABILITY.
- MAJOR HEALTH ISSUES FAR IN EXCESS OF SIMILAR REGIONS.

ALL OF THIS INDICATES A SEVERE WEAKNESS WITHIN THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF THOSE WHO HAVE "A DUTY OF CARE" TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PROVIDE REASONABLE PROTECTION FOR OUR RESIDENTS.

THE LATEST DISASTER: <sup>FEB.</sup> (2014)

FIRE WHICH SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE LOCAL AREA AND EVENTUATED INTO THE HAZELWOOD OPEN CUT MINE.

POINTS TO NOTE:

MOST OF OUR WEATHER COMES FROM THE WEST, IN PARTICULAR, EXCESSIVE WINDS.

NO ATTEMPTS WERE IMPLEMENTED BY THE AUTHORITIES AT THE ONSET OF THE FIRE SEASON TO CLEAR LONG GRASS AND A BUILDUP OF FOREST DEBRIS ALONG THE WESTERN CORRIDORE.

THIS PROVIDED A DIRECT PATHWAY INTO THE TOWNSHIP OF MORWELL AND THE COMMUNITY OF HEARNES OAK, INCLUDING THE OPEN CUT MINE.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THIS OVERSIGHT IS BETTER MANAGED IN FUTURE.

AN ADDED CONCERN IS THE CLOSE PROXIMITY OF WOOD PLANTATIONS WHICH SUPPORT THE A.P.M.,

WHILST THE EXISTANCE OF THESE PLANTATIONS ARE VITAL TO THE MILLS OPERATIONS, FURTHER THOUGHT AND PLANNING NEEDS TO GO INTO THEIR LOCATION, IT MAY BE PRUDENT TO CONSIDER A WIDENING OF THE BUFFER ZONES TO SEPERATE PLANTATIONS FROM RESIDENTIAL LIVING, COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN CUT MINES.

SINCE THE PRIVATISATION OF THE LOCAL POWER INDUSTRY, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN A SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION IN BOTH MAN POWER AND EQUIPMENT FOR FIRE PROTECTION WITHIN THE MINES.

THIS HAS PLACED GREATER RESPONSIBILITY ON THE C. F. A. TO PLUG THE GAP. I WOULD QUESTION WHETHER THERE HAS BEEN ADEQUATE FUNDS AND PLANNING MADE AVAILABLE TO THIS VITAL GROUP TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE RESOURCES TO MEET THEIR INCREASED ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

I DO NOT WISH TO ENTER INTO ANY PERSONAL CRITICISM OF THE OPEN CUT MINE OPERATORS, OR, COMMENT ON POSSIBLE NEGLIGENCE ON BEHALF OF ITS MANAGEMENT.

THIS SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE APPROPRIATE INVESTIGATION BODY.

HOWEVER, IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO SPECULATE THAT THE REGULATORY BODY OVERSEEING MINE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS APPEARS TO HAVE SOME NEED TO JUSTIFY THEIR ACTIONS (OR LACK OF) IN REGARD TO THEIR ROLE,

### THE E. P. A.

THIS GROUP IS VITAL TO THE HEALTH ISSUES OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

SOME RESIDENTS SEE THEM AS A "TOOTHLESS TIGER" AND SERIOUSLY DOUBT THEIR INTEGRITY AND COMMITMENT TO THE TASK.

RESIDENTS DO NOT TRUST THEIR PUBLISHED FIGURES ON EITHER AIR OR WATER QUALITY. TO SAY THEY HAVE A "IMAGE PROBLEM" WOULD BE A UNDERSTATEMENT. THIS IS MOST UNSATISFACTORY GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES:

AS WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT THIS GROUP DID A EXCELLENT JOB OF PROTECTING PEOPLE AND ASSETS ONCE THE FIRE WAS UNDERWAY.

SPECIAL MENTION NEEDS TO BE MADE OF THE DEDICATION AND SKILL OF THE WATER BOMBING CHOPPER PILOTS. WITHOUT THEIR INPUT THIS DISASTER WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN MASSIVE LOSS OF ASSETS AND POSSIBLY MANY LIVES. - WELL DONE - AND THANKYOU.

### FUTURE HEALTH CONCERNS:

WE ARE ALL CONCERNED ABOUT FUTURE HEALTH ISSUES RESULTING FROM THIS FIRE. ACCURATE RESULTS MAY NOT SURFACE FOR MANY MONTHS/YEARS TO COME. AUTHORITIES WERE SLOW TO ACT ON THESE ISSUES AND WHEN THEY DID THEIR ACTIONS WERE SOMETIMES INCONSISTANT.

### THE CLEANUP PACKAGE.

THIS IS A DISGRACE!

I CANNOT HELP BUT BE BEMUSED BY THE SIZE OF THE STATE GOVERNMENTS RESPONSE. (2 MILLION DOLLERS)

(SYDNEY FOOTBALL CLUB PAYS "LANCE FRANKLIN" 10 MILLION DOLLERS TO PLAY FOOTBALL INTERSTATE.) VICTORIAS STATE GOVERNMENT OFFERS (2) MILLION TO 40,000+ AFFECTED RESIDENTS TO CLEAN UP THEIR HOMES AFTER A DISASTER.

THIS WOULD SUGGEST THAT AN URGENT INVESTIGATION INTO ALL AUSTRALIAN'S PRIORITIES BE UNDERTAKEN. - VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT - YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED! TO ADD TO THIS INSULT IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE MEAGRE PACKAGE HAS BEEN HITJACKED BY THE LOCAL COUNCIL AND 85% WILL RECEIVE NO ASSISTANCE WHATSOEVER!!!!

I BELIEVE IT IS CRITICAL THAT THIS ENQUIRY ADDRESSES EACH OF THE OBVIOUS SHORTCOMINGS AND IDENTIFIES THE INADEQUACIES IN THE OVERALL PLANNING STRATEGY FOR THIS VITAL REGION,

HOPEFULLY THE FINDINGS WILL RESULT IN A MUCH MORE PROACTIVE APPROACH IN THE FUTURE. IF IT DOES NOT, SADLY IT WILL BE DOOMED TO FAIL, ALONG WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO PREVENT FUTURE DISASTERS OF THIS MAGNITUDE.

— THE LATROBE VALLEY DESERVES BETTER —

IF THE BOARD WISHES TO PERSUE ANY OF THE POINTS I HAVE RAISED IN MY SUBMISSION I AM ONLY TOO HAPPY TO COOPERATE.

I CAN BE CONTACTED AT

MORWELL 3840.

GOOD LUCK IN YOUR INVESTIGATION AND ENQUIRY.

BRIEN C. FLINT.

Brien C. Flint.