

HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

Submission cover sheet

Post your submission with this cover sheet to:

Submissions Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry
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Email your submission with this cover sheet to info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au.

Title: Mrs	First Name: SUSAN	Surname: DIETRICH
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input checked="" 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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15/4/14

Acknowledgements

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Signature _____

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Date

What worked well in the lead up to the fire:

The community was given adequate information about the weather and fire conditions on the day.

We were warned to have our plan in place so we knew where we would evacuate to and what we would do with animals and elderly. We were told this time (unlike black saturday) to leave before it was too late.

What worked well during the fire:

On the morning of the start of the Driffield fire, I awoke to a frighteningly large plume of smoke heading quickly in our direction. This seemed to be started from the same arsonist that was starting fires in the same relative location 2 weeks previous or so. My daughter's house stood between our house and the plume of smoke. She is vision impaired and I was petrified for all of us. My inlaws farm was also in that general direction. I was amazed at how quickly and how well the CFA got that fire under control. I was petrified because my main exit from Yinnar was blocked by the fire - so was plenty grateful for the fast acting fire fighters.

What worked well in putting the fires out:

The CFA. Craig Lapsley and Ken Lay did a wonderful job of keeping us informed and calm.

What didn't work well in the lead up to the fire:

The old mine should have been capped so that the embers would have landed on green lawn or cement or something other than a large fossil fuel pit.

There were not enough emergency vehicles in place, watching and ready to act. It seems the police could have been out patrolling, and perhaps private security teams and private fire brigades in place at the APM, all of the mines, all of the plantations. All of these private entities should be required to have these emergency crews and equipment at the ready to fight and prevent fires.

There was not enough emphasis on catching the arsonist prior to the big fire. He/she/they gave us plenty of warning.

What didn't work well during the fire? THIS IS MY MAIN POINT AND WHY I AM HERE

There is a frightening video of the Leongatha pump truck travelling through our fire in Driffield down the Strzelecki Hwy. It shows the fire truck travelling through fire on both sides of the road, travelling amongst panicked drivers, rushing through the fire, leaving it to burn as it headed to the APM to put that fire out. It is inconceivable to me that this fire truck was directed by the Incident controller to travel to the APM, leaving me in danger and leaving this fire to burn and quickly join forces with the Hernes Oak fire and attack the mine and Morwell. Had the firefighters been allowed to stop at our fire perhaps those embers would not have entered the uncapped mine, causing such huge cleanup and health expenses that we are having to bear in large part ourselves.

→ Russell Northe got promoted for doing nothing. This is a slap in our faces.

The state government, namely Russell Northe and Denis Napthine, did virtually nothing in the first 16 days or so of the fire. This is unacceptable. And when I got Russell to respond to me, and I asked him on facebook why the state had not declared this an emergency he evaded the question stating that the volunteers were doing an excellent job, etc etc. Even Tony Abbott said he was just waiting for the state to ask and they would have helped. They did not ask. I told Russell Northe that he should get his face out there and answer questions and help his people out. After that conversation and probably others telling him to do something as well, we finally started seeing the people we pay handsomely to represent us. I am totally flabbergasted that this government dealt with this by promoting Russell to minister for coal mines after this. We did not need a pretty boy figure head to help us through this, we needed him at the vanguard of the situation, leading and providing solutions from the start.

The information that came from the Health minister was contradictory, late, and of no great use. I was told to use air masks -- I was told to get them for free. There were none. I paid \$5 for one and then was told it was useless against carbon monoxide. There were two occasions when we were doing test routes down on wallace street when I was getting tired and my student was getting tired. She being a doctor suggested that maybe we should leave the area because it might be something in the smoke that was making us tired. We did not have adequate information about the dangers of the fire/smoke/soot. The help that came was too little too late.

The "help" that came to the town wasn't enough. It was poorly managed and ignored a large fraction of the population. If you were a working citizen in Morwell, and at the coles supermarket, you got nothing but were expected to be at the coles, with the doors opening all the time. I took my air mask off to do my shopping and had to put it back on because I couldn't breathe. All the while though, the cashiers were unmasked as were the shelf-stockers and were forced to exert lots of energy but received no help from the government.

People who are unemployed and had a health care card in Morwell got stipends of unmanaged and seemingly unrestricted lots of \$500 to escape and yet many drank it away while those cashiers that served them their extra lots of cigarettes and booze got no money to endure the health threat to their own lives. If they stayed home, they would get no pay. They couldn't knick off to a beach house because they had jobs and children to attend to. The money issued just showed how poor this government was in responding and how incorrect they were in their response. The money issued should have been across the board, and not limited to the railroad tracks.

There were many times during the fire when Yinnar was attacked by smoke and yet we didn't ever get a mention or consideration.

The bucket caper was a disaster. Who doesn't own a bucket??? And yet, when I who spends all of my working day in Morwell driving through all the soot and ash, tried to get a bucket I could not because I didn't live in Morwell. I have three cars in my fleet and would have liked the car-wash coupons. Instead, I had to file a business grant application which I did and which was approved. I got my grant and yet the coles workers got nothing. The two workers I am thinking of live just on the other side of Princes Drive, and were threatened big time by the hernes oak fire (they were even asked to evacuate) so they were smelling it at home and at work and yet because they are working

citizens, they received no acknowledgement.

What else didn't work during the fire: THAT AWFUL CFA APP. It was ridiculous and notified us constantly of emergencies that did not exist. I would like to be a part of the team that fixes this awful thing.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY TO PREVENT SUCH A FIRE IN THE FUTURE?

Prosecute the arsonists.

Install and monitor top-of-the-line CCTV everywhere

Cover the mine.

Strengthen the laws for covering the mine and maintaining emergency equipment at mines and plantations

Change the focus of government from saving money to protecting lives.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY TO RESPOND TO FIRES?

Look into how that fire truck from leongatha went through my fire, knowingly endangering my life so it could get to the paper mill. The incident controller should be directed to put out fires, not drive through the ones that are on public land to get to the ones on private holdings.

We should have our own foam trucks. APM and Mine should also own their own.

There should be a bigger gap between private housing and mines and plantations. Currently, plantations are close to the mines, close to the power lines and close to the houses in the valley. More legal responsibility needs to be exerted to these companies.

Yinnar has been ignored.
My tomato crop was ruined by
ash. and it is probably
unhealthy to eat them.

All this stress from taking all this
time from my life is going to give
me a heart attack!