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## HAZEL WOOD 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: Mr  | First Name: Shaun  | Surname: Dietrich |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Application and administration of regulatory regimes<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) | Response to fire by:<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazelwood Coal Mine<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Agencies<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies |                   |

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15/4/14,

## Acknowledgements

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Signature

*SD Dietl*

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

Date

15/4/2014

**Dear Board of Inquiry,**

The following is my written submission which I believe falls in the term of reference points listed below. My submission contains links to YouTube videos of news reports and current affair programs made during the mine fire disaster. Thus this document is best viewed online so that the links can be clicked and you will be taken to the exact point in the video for the particular quote I have made.

My submission is made up of two parts, one part covering all aspects of the fire itself. The last part concentrating on the health effects of the fire. During the fire I had to work in Morwell which sometimes meant being outside. I had trouble breathing at times. It also gave me irritated eyes and a terrible headache which I normally don't have. I do consider myself lucky though as I didn't have to sleep in Morwell during the night.

- 1. The origin and circumstances of the fire, including how it spread into the Hazelwood Coal Mine.**
- 2. The adequacy and effectiveness of the measures taken by or on behalf of the owner, operator and licensee of the Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent the outbreak of a fire, and to be prepared to respond to an outbreak of a fire including mitigating its spread and severity, in the Hazelwood Coal Mine, including whether the owner, operator and licensee of the Hazelwood Coal Mine, or any person or entity acting on behalf of any of them:**
  - i. implemented the recommendations arising from reviews of previous events; and**
  - ii. in the opinion of the Board, breached or did not comply with the requirements of (or under) any relevant statute or regulation, including any notification or directive given under such statute or regulation and any code of practice, management plan or similar scheme, developed and/or implemented due to such requirements.**
- 3. The adequacy and effectiveness of the application and administration of relevant regulatory regimes in relation to the risk of, and response to, fire at the Hazelwood Coal Mine.**
- 4. The adequacy and effectiveness of the response to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire by:**
  - i. the owner, operator and licensee of the Hazelwood Coal Mine;**
  - ii. the emergency services; and**
  - iii. other relevant government agencies, including environmental and public health officials,**

## **Was the Coal Mine fire avoidable?**

The coal mine fire occurred in a part of the mine that had not been mined for over 30 years. When I viewed a picture of the mine photographed in the 1980's and compared to now, the batters of the mine look very similar. In all this time the coal has been left uncovered which has created an unnecessary fire risk.

The CFA have posted aerial video showing heat images of the hot spots in the mine. The videos show clearly where there is exposed coal we have fire.

CFA Video Footage with heat maps:

See Hazelwood mine fire aerial footage - 13 March 2014: <http://youtu.be/Hxodq7QeJnY>

Hazelwood aerial footage 1st March 2014: <http://youtu.be/oqnVpu8jDwc>



Simply, these batters should have been covered and covering these exposed batters which have posed such a recent threat to the town of Morwell should be a priority. There is more though that could have been done to stop this fire.



Image of Coal Mine Batters as on Google Satellite images 2014.

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1gOvOSUoOVHd0VfdI9ORE1YNkU/edit>

When the fire entered the mine it took out both electrical power lines to the mine that operated the water pumps.

*This statement was issued by GDF Suez.*

[http://www.gdfsuezau.com/media/UploadedDocuments/News/Morwell%20mine%20fire%20update%2005\\_03\\_14.pdf](http://www.gdfsuezau.com/media/UploadedDocuments/News/Morwell%20mine%20fire%20update%2005_03_14.pdf)

*If fire service pipelines and sprays were operating on the Western end of the Northern batters why did the fire spread?*

*The severity of the fire took out two separate power supply lines into the mine, which stopped the pumps used to supply water to the fire services system leaving only gravity fed pressures to fight the fire. Power was not restored until the following day, by which time fire protection pipelines in both the Northern and Eastern areas of the mine had been severely damaged, impacting our ability to contain the fire.*

I don't understand why the mine relied on overhead powerlines to power their water pumps. It's well known I thought that over head powerlines are more likely to be effected by fire. So the very thing they are relying on to help put out fires is susceptible to fire. I would suggest at the very least that the power would be supplied underground.

It's not an isolated incident for over head powerlines to fail. Just recently we had powerlines fail on the 4th of April 2014 which caused a massive explosion in Morwell. Please see: [http://youtu.be/LgcsB\\_3Qu1s](http://youtu.be/LgcsB_3Qu1s) . I would like to think

in dangerous areas where fire could cause massive problems that the powerlines are underground. I would think powerlines in and around a coal mine would be underground. The fire prevention system of the mine should have something else to provide backup if the electricity fails as well. Cr Graeme Middlemiss on the 7:30 report 7/03/2014 mentions going to Diesel Pumps quickly. Please see: [http://youtu.be/T\\_dMGqtdcmE?t=4m37s](http://youtu.be/T_dMGqtdcmE?t=4m37s) This video is from the ABC 7.30 show which aired on 7/3/2014.

One of the things used to help suppress the fire and smoke was Compressed Air Foam. This capability was not sourced from the local area. This was initially sourced from Tasmania with extra resources from the ACT and NSW. The fire had been burning over 2 weeks when it was announced on the news that they were going to get extra Compressed Air Foam, Source Win News 25/02/2014 Please see: <http://youtu.be/oxc1NxuACks?t=2m3s>

This CAF system used to be locally available in the Latrobe Valley as seen on this video. Please see: [http://youtu.be/T\\_dMGqtdcmE?t=3m54s](http://youtu.be/T_dMGqtdcmE?t=3m54s) This video is from the ABC 7.30 show, which aired on 7/3/2014.

During the fire, they were installing water pipes to help put out the fire. This video was shown on ABC News 4/3/2014 Please see: <http://youtu.be/jM5cLbeKeCc?t=4m28s>. Infrastructure to help fight the fires should be installed and actively working before the fires start.

It would seem that government regulations were not strong enough in forcing the mine operator to have their fire defences up to the highest standards. As reported on ABC News 4/3/2014 Please see: <http://youtu.be/jM5cLbeKeCc?t=4m40s> QUOTE from video "*The Department of State Development inspected what is now the main fire site on January 9th exactly a month before the fire started. The mines operator GDF Suez says work safe Victoria inspected the mine in June 2012. Investigations were also undertaken after fires at the mine in 2007 and 2008.*"

More Sources for this information can be found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/mine-management-queried-in-hazelwood-fire-20140228-33rhc.html>

It has also been reported that:

*Energy and Resources Minister Nicholas Kotsiras has confirmed rehabilitation - the process of capping exposed coal batters under layers of clay or soil - occurred in the mine as per the specifications set out within its 'works plan', approved by the then Department of Primary Industries in 2009.*

Source: <http://www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/2130633/exposed-coal-batter-ticked-off-by-state/?cs=1462>

These batters have a lot of exposed coal. This can be seen in satellite pictures before the mine fire started.

On the 9th of February 2014, were resources despatched to the best locations? I would request that the Mine Fire Inquiry obtain the video that is linked from the Leongatha CFA page on facebook. The video which was removed showed a chilling account of the Leongatha pumper travelling down the Strzelecki Hwy, bypassing the fire on both sides of the road. You can see the truck driving past the signs pointing toward Yinnar. It appears in this video, and in the commentary, that this video is showing a pumper being directed to the Maryvale paper mill, ignoring the fire that subsequently burnt Yinnar farms and closed Yinnar Streets, and subsequently joined the Hernes Oak fire and powered into Morwell and the mine. <http://www.facebook.com/LeongathaCFA> They posted a link to YouTube on the 17th of Feb 2014. Also on that page it has the truck fighting fires at the APM. If this truck is coming from Leongatha it would seem that the Hazelwood Fire should be the one attended to as it's closer. For reasons I don't know the video was taken down from YouTube. This was the old YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lanpbEbHT9w&feature=youtu.be>





**Leongatha Fire Brigade** shared a link.

February 14 · Edited

Some vision of the drive to Maryvale taken on the side of the Pumper with a Gopro, by the brigade on the 9th of Feb.



**Leongatha Pumper code 1 to Maryvale Papermill**

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

This video is Leongatha Pumper headed to Maryvale on the 9th Feb 2014. This video shows the intensity of the fires on the Strzelecki highway.

Like · Comment · Share

88 20 39

Link on Leongatha's CFA page

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1gOvOSUoOVHQ25rcINveTBEMFE/edit>



## Leongatha Fire Brigade

February 9

Leongatha's Pumper is responding Code 1 (Lights & Sirens) to assist in Morwell.

Let's send them a "like" of support!

Like · Comment · Share

389 7 1

389 people like this.

Top Comments ▾



Write a comment...



**Ma Wallace** thankyou Leongatha for your help over here

Like · Reply · 3 · February 9 at 2:28pm



**Claude Courtier** Good luck to our firemen and women, stay safe and thank you.

Like · Reply · 4 · February 9 at 12:13pm



**Gillian Reid Spencer** Thanks gatha

Like · Reply · February 9 at 1:46pm



**Amanda Hughes** Stay safe guys !

Like · Reply · February 9 at 1:42pm



**Margaret Denbrok** good luck firemen and women and please take care out there fighting the fire..

Like · Reply · February 9 at 1:23pm



**Kellie O'Callaghan** Thank you !

Like · Reply · February 9 at 12:20pm



**Melissa Meade** What's happing in Morwell

Like · Reply · February 9 at 12:19pm

Write a comment...

On Leongatha's CFA page

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1gOvOSUoOVHM3BTbjIGN2NUTIE/edit>

It has been noted that a suspected arsonist started the fire. Before the fire started on the 9th of February there were a number of fires started in the local area. These particular fires terrified us as we thought they might come towards our house. It would seem to me such an important piece of infrastructure to this state should be better protected by the police.

Possible preventative measures:



1. On high fire days that more patrol vehicles are sent around the area of the Coal Mine. A visible presence is going to be a deterrence. We know it's only a short period of time when all police really need to patrol these areas as Total Fire Ban days are not every day of the year.
2. That video surveillance is used to monitor all traffic movements in areas that if fire started could cause significant damage.
3. That plantations are not to be planted near coal mines. We know the embers of eucalypt trees will carry a long way.
4. A dirt graded line and grass cut around the mines. We should make it easy for the fire service if needed to protect the mine. They should not have to be in bushland trying to protect the mine.

The mine fire has brought in a lot of people and resources from interstate. We need to have the skills and the equipment in the valley to fight these fires.

## **The Health Impacts of the Fire.**

**iv. informing the affected communities of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire and about its known effects and risks; and**

**v. responding to those effects on, and risks to, the affected communities.**

In the following I will talk about these two important issues.

I see from the start that the authorities have taken an approach that it was going to be a short term event. The event was not short term. It would have been better to assume the worst case scenario. People were not informed about a worst case situation. Some people were told to leave Morwell on the 9th of February (source Nine News). Please see: <http://youtu.be/ZOtcPonPo20?t=8m50s>

The next day I recorded several news reports on TV. The following is what they said in regards to how long the coal mine fire was going to keep burning.

As reported on Win Local news "that it could burn for sometime" Peter Ryan, "That's a bit like how long is a piece of a string. If you're going to pick a fire that is the most difficult to put out you would most likely start with a Coal Mine". Please see: [http://youtu.be/ISqxy\\_T5avg?t=2m30s](http://youtu.be/ISqxy_T5avg?t=2m30s)

I heard this information from our Deputy Premier and had no idea how long it was going to take to put out. How can people judge from hearing this whether they should evacuate or not? It would be better to tell us lengths of time like weeks or months.

On ABC News it was reported that authorities say it could take days to put out the Hazelwood Coal mine. Please see: [http://youtu.be/ISqxy\\_T5avg?t=9m0s](http://youtu.be/ISqxy_T5avg?t=9m0s)

On Nine News the presenter ( Peter Hitchener) asked the reporter (Seb Costello) , " How long is expected to burn?" reporter, " It's expected to burn for at least a week." Please see: [http://youtu.be/ISqxy\\_T5avg?t=13m9s](http://youtu.be/ISqxy_T5avg?t=13m9s)



On the 19th of February the Chief Health Officer Rosemary Lester said for residents, "If possible it's good if they can take a break out of the smoky conditions, even for a short period of time. That lessens their total exposure to the smoke." Please see: <http://youtu.be/v3PhtxOxaOI?t=1m1s> Later Rosemary Lester said, "It's not in the scheme of things a long term exposure. At these levels we would not expect to see any increase in long term health effects". Please see: <http://youtu.be/v3PhtxOxaOI?t=3m12s> Both of these statements from the Chief Health Officer didn't allay our fears. People were told to get out of the smoke as it was bad for their health. But at the same time no need to evacuate.

Then on the 25th of February:

We were told to don face masks. Supposedly these face masks were to protect us. 25000 face masks were being distributed to Morwell residents who could pick them up from certain places within Morwell. Source Win News. Please see: <http://youtu.be/oxc1NxuACks?t=4m2s> These masks were not distributed to residents houses directly. If the resident was not watching the TV news, listening to the radio or on internet they would know nothing. Residents were made to go out in the smoke to get a mask but advised to stay inside to keep out of the smoke.

Then on the same day, Craig Lapsley (Fire Services Commissioner) was on 3AW radio and said the following, "One of the precautionary things that the chief health officer has indicated that if people were to wear P2 masks. It is a basic mask that you would use if you were painting or something like that. It won't reduce your risk to any great deal. It may make it a little bit more comfortable about the amount of smoke or ash that is in the area. It is not necessary. It was one of those things people have asked about. They are being provided for free through the Latrobe City Council. They're not mandatory. They won't beat carbon monoxide. They will simple make it a little more comfortable if you're in Morwell with the amount of smoke about." Please listen to Craig Lapsley:

<http://media.mytalk.com.au/3AW/AUDIO/Laps.mp3>

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1gOvOSUoOVHwmlIUTdSTf85S2s/edit>

Sixteen days after the fire began, and after sixteen days of inhaling the smoke and ash, on the 26th of Feb, Rosemary Lester the Chief Health Officer gave the following advice. "You need to stay out of the smoke if you can for most of the time." Please see: [http://youtu.be/Gg58UUY\\_dS8?t=5m56s](http://youtu.be/Gg58UUY_dS8?t=5m56s). Where was this information on February 9th?

What this meant to me is basically, Morwell residents were asked to be prisoners in their own homes without being evacuated. If they couldn't be prisoners in their own home that they were going to put their health at risk by being out in the smoke.

On the 27th of Feb early in the Morning I took a screen shot of the EPA hourly air quality data table. With readings several times worse than Very Poor level it was concerning.

## Hourly air quality data table

This bulletin is updated hourly with information calculated on data readings averaged over 8 hours for carbon monoxide, 24 hours for PM2.5 and 1 hour for PM10, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and visibility reduction. Detailed information on the calculation of the index is available below.

EPA air quality hourly update: February 27, 2014 6.00 am - 7.00 am

|                |               |    |   |    |       |  |       |       |           |
|----------------|---------------|----|---|----|-------|--|-------|-------|-----------|
| LATROBE VALLEY | Morwell South | 47 |   | 1  | 264.5 |  | 15.56 | 1,058 | VERY POOR |
|                | Morwell East  | 02 |   | 1  | 32.8  |  | 1.24  | 131   | POOR      |
|                | Traralgon     |    | 2 | 11 | 0     |  | 15.4  | 0.57  | 24        |



View the hourly air quality interactive map.

### Air quality index

Very good 0-33    Good 34-66    Fair 67-99    Poor 100-149    Very poor 150+

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1gOvOSUoOVHTWJmNEhUYjIYajA/edit>

Then on the 28th of February we learn that the Prime Minister has not received a request from Victoria for assistance. The Prime Minister said, "We stand ready to receive a request from Victoria for assistance under the natural disaster arrangements and we will activate our part immediately." Please see: <http://youtu.be/Qhhbux8Ej1U?t=6m45s> The state government should have requested federal government assistance much earlier than the 28th. They needed federal assistance when it became apparent that the fire wasn't going to be out in 2 weeks.

I hope the information contained in my written submission will aid in the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry. More videos about the Mine fire and all the nightly news broadcasts about the fire can be found at <http://goo.gl/obXftM>.

Thank You very much for reading my document.

Yours Sincerely,

Shaun Dietrich