

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.

Title: Mr	First Name: VINCE	Surname: MARINO
Organisation represented (if applicable):		
Email address:	[REDACTED]	
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Telephone: [REDACTED]	Mobile: [REDACTED]	
<input type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire <input type="checkbox"/> Application and administration of regulatory regimes <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)	Response to fire by: <input type="checkbox"/> Hazelwood Coal Mine <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials <input type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies	

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Acknowledgements

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Date

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

Dear Sir Madam

I'm writing in relation to the mine fire - angry and frustrated at the total disregard to the surrounding community's health and well being and environmental effects.

Since we had this devastating episode of toxic smoke and ash inflicted upon us, people's lives have been turned upside down with psychological stress not knowing what long term health effects this might have.

This should never have happened and it's not acceptable in this day and age. Forget about the circumstances in which this fire occurred, we will never stop naturally occurring fires, we will never stop idiots arsonists starting fires, but we can minimize the risk of fires in open cut mines with highly volatile combustible fuel by putting in place proper regulations to cut the risk. We don't want a corporation that has poor regulations in place cost cutting to achieve their bottom line for the shareholders and have total disregard to the communities that surround them, they have a duty of care to all.

It seems GDF Suez had no capital expenditure aimed to maintaining the power station and the mine with substandard equipment not replaced, it is rumoured that there was no backup generator for the mine fire system in place.

How GDF Suez Australia energy corporate governance and due diligence allow matters to reach this unacceptable level is questionable, it should never been allowed to happen in the first instance.

GDF Suez has been purely defensive about its affairs and has not planned adequately to prevent this crisis occurring in the first place and as a result people's health and wellbeing has been compromised.

I have lived in the Valley most of my life never have I experienced this despicable situation where my town has been subjected to such devastation, they should be ashamed!

Questions must be asked as to whether the mine owners had an adequate fire response unit in place to tackle such a complicated fire. A fire which is out of the ordinary where specialised personnel and equipment trained in fighting such fires should be in place and not be totally reliant on the CFA & MFB who mostly deal with bush, house and factory fires. I have great praise for they are absolute heroes in my opinion they put their lives at risk not knowing the implications of the toxic fumes they were dealing with not being familiar with fighting such fires learning as they went along.

So I believe to avoid this tragedy ever occurring again we should make the culprits at fault accountable, the way all business all over Australia are when they breach health and safety regulations towards their workers community and environment when work safe steps in to impose hefty fines for non compliance.

I say hit them where it hurts the most and send a clear message that this action or lack of, will not be tolerated or accepted and that is in the hip pocket. Let's not kid ourselves or do some corporations think themselves to be above the law.

You only have to look at the example of Exxon who was sued for billions in the Valdez Oil spill I'm sure they will follow. Stricter guidelines to make sure such an event don't occur again, it's in their best interest.

I would also like to state that during the early stages of the fire there wasn't much reaction from the relevant authorities, it was only after much outcry from the people that things were put in place with advisory messages from health officials suggesting vulnerable people such as the elderly young and people with cardiovascular problems to relocate with assistance packages in the form of grants which were given only to those who had concession cards. I question who is and who isn't vulnerable when we are bombarded with toxic fumes and ash, there should be no discrimination and I find it deplorable that we were categorised, but these people who were not considered as vulnerable were left to their own means to relocate at their own expense possibly loosing income and disrupting their lives.

Health Officer Rosemary Lesters' recommendations were welcomed but left too late. One week without masks exposed to PM 2.5 particulate matter which can cause respiratory problems, could pose a risk of long term heart and lung disorder, cause asthma, cough, bronchitis, can also lodge in lungs and bloodstream with unknown health implications.

Vince Marino