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Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

1 attachment



SUBMISSION-TO-HAZELWOOD-MINE-FIRE-ENQUIRY.doc

Title: Mr

First Name: Roderic

Surname: INCOLL

Email address: [REDACTED]

Home or office phone: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Measures taken by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire

Please select one of the following options: 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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## BOARD OF INQUIRY INTO THE HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE OF 9 FEBRUARY 2014

### SUBMISSION OF RODERIC ALAN INCOLL

1. This submission refers to Term of Reference 2 relating to 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.
2. I have extensive experience in the management and control of forest fires dating from 1960. I applied this knowledge to the protection of the open cut coal mines in the Latrobe Valley during the period 1984 - 1989 as explained in subsequent paragraphs.
3. My CV is Attachment 1 to this submission.
4. During 1984-1989 I held four positions in the State Electricity Commission (SEC) Production Group of Departments in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria. Three positions from 1984 -1988 were within Engineering Services Department.
5. These were:
  - 1984: Emergency Services Officer
  - 1986: Superintendent General Services
  - 1988: Manager Services Division
6. A common element in these positions was responsibility for
  - management of the three station, three shift SEC Fire and Rescue Service that covered fire protection and emergency rescue in all SECV facilities in the Latrobe Valley excepting the open cut coal mines, each of which had a dedicated fire service reporting to the Open Cut Manager;
  - management of the Rural Services Group, a team about thirty strong that carried out works relating to rehabilitation, forestry and other land-related activities. All members were trained in forest and general purpose fire fighting.
  - advice to the General Manager Production (GMP) in relation to the external threat of bushfires to brown coal mining operations:
7. In 1989, functions were regrouped into production centres (Yallourn, Morwell, Loy Yang) as an organisational prelude to the privatisation of power generation. Engineering Services Department functions were divested to Production Centres and specialist functions in various locations were contracted as required.
8. The SEC Fire and Rescue Service function was disbanded and its core functions became the responsibility of the Country Fire Authority.

9. I was appointed Manager Services Division, Yallourn Production Centre, with change management responsibilities, while retaining the role of providing advice to the General Manager Production (GMP) regarding the external threat of bushfires to brown coal mining operations.
10. In addressing my responsibility for advising the GMP about the protection of the open cut mines from ignition by external fires, I recall identifying precedents dating from the origins of brown coal mining in 1929, 1939, 1944, and 1977.<sup>1,2,3</sup>
11. I was aware of the fire hazard posed by dry brown coal, particularly in a fragmented or powdered form, and that an elevated risk of ignition was always present on hot dry windy days.
12. This risk was exacerbated in high fire danger periods and significant mine fires have generally coincided with summers marked by serious and widespread bushfires elsewhere.
13. Not to say that a risk of ignition by misadventure or arson could be excluded at any time when weather conditions were conducive to the spread of fire.
14. To address this threat in a current context, I conducted a desktop exercise involving all Open Cut Management in 1988. "Exercise Torch" involved presentations, syndicate work, and an over-flight of extensive state forests to the north of the Production Centre to highlight for all participants the potential risk of external ignitions disrupting Victoria's base load power supplies.
15. The standard response of the open cut fire services under the SEC arrangements on hot dry windy days at any time of the year, was to start up large scale irrigation systems that covered exposed coal faces with a water spray.
16. In my opinion this was an effective response.
17. At that time Morwell Open Cut provided the coal required by Hazelwood Power Station. The water for the irrigation system was obtained from a sump at the base of Morwell open cut. Large capacity electrical pumps circulated the water through the irrigation system. Morwell Power Station generated the power required for this operation, as well as for the Briquetting Factory.
18. Generally throughout the Latrobe Valley open cut mining operation, once an area of coal had been worked out it was rehabilitated with an earth covering and sown down or otherwise revegetated, so that mine faces not required for production were effectively protected from ignition.
19. Notwithstanding that these precautions were taken on a routine basis, in my opinion the SEC was fortunate in terms of the small number of brown coal fires resulting in disruption to base load power generation experienced in the context of the overall risk scenario.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1 of "Little Europe", Palmer-Higgs books (online) gives some detail of the early fires.

<sup>2</sup> The 1944 fire was the subject of a Royal Commission by Justice L B Stretton.

<sup>3</sup> The 1977 fire was subject of a Board of Inquiry.

20. I would have expected that fire incidence would increase with any relaxation of these precautions.
21. In 1989 I left the employment of the SEC to take up an appointment as Chief Fire Officer of the Department of Conservation and Environment, so I have no direct knowledge of the practices and procedures adopted by the private enterprise licensees.

(signed)

R. A. Incoll  
29 April 2014

## ATTACHMENT 1 - CURRICULUM VITAE

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### RODERIC INCOLL AFSM

#### *Current*

#### **Bushfire Risk consultant**

Services provided: Expert opinion in bushfire related litigation; Site inspections, Fire management planning and implementation; Bushfire Risk Assessment, Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) and Bushfire Management Statements (BMS). For example:

- A range of private and corporate clients including WorkSafe Victoria, in relation to forest related personal injury claims and as expert witness in bushfire matters.
- City of Whitehorse - (1997-ongoing) Strategy for Fire Management of Bushland Reserves - prepare, consult, revise Strategy, prepare Fire Risk Management plans, train workforce, implement plans
- Latrobe University – range of assessment and appraisal projects with town planning implications
- City of Maroondah – appraisal of fire risk and recommendations
- Shire of Nillumbik Ratepayers' Assoc (2003)- prepare risk appraisal

#### *1990 - 1996*

#### **Chief Fire Officer, Department of Natural Resources and Environment**

Responsible for bushfire protection for publicly owned lands, 34% of Victoria. Major achievements included setting up Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Lands in Victoria, managing the Australian evaluation of the Canadair CL-415 fire bomber, and introducing a critical incident debriefing program.

#### **Board member, Country Fire Authority of Victoria.**

#### **Director, Australasian Fire Authorities Council Ltd.**

AFAC is Australia's national association of fire agencies. Also convened Research and Development Committee of AFAC.

#### **Member, State Emergency Management Council for Victoria.**

This Council managed emergency arrangements in Victoria under the Emergency Management Act.

#### *1984-1990*

#### **Manager, Services Division, Engineering Services Department, State Electricity Commission.**

Responsible for shift fire protection, emergency rescue, survey, drafting and forestry services to the Production Group.; and for policy and strategy for protection of the Latrobe Valley open cuts, power stations, and key assets from wildfire. *(one of four positions with SECV 1984-1989).*

#### *1976-1984*

#### **District Forester, Toolangi, Forests Commission, Victoria.**

Responsible for management of a large multiple use forest area including fire management, logging, recreation, personnel, budget, and industrial relations management; coordination and cooperation with many other agencies; and enforcement, including prosecution of offences magistrates court. Appointed Controller of the Warburton fire on "Ash Wednesday" 16 February 1983 by the Forests Commission.

#### *1971-1972*

#### **Fire Training Officer, Fire Protection Branch, Forests Commission:**

Set up the Fire Training Section, developed manuals and training aids including a sound colour training film "Black Out"; managed delivery of training state-wide.

*1960-1976***Forester**

Experience in fire and natural resource management with extensive fire control responsibilities. Work experience as a field Forester in a range of locations dates from 1960. Military experience Army Reserve 1963-1974 - command, control and logistics, officer training.

*EDUCATION*

Bachelor of Arts in Social Science, Monash (1994)  
 Graduate Diploma of Business, Monash (1987)  
 Diploma of Forestry, Victoria, (1983)  
 Diploma of Forestry, Creswick, (1959)  
 Cert of Institute of Fire Engineers UK

*AWARDS*

- Fire Awareness Week Individual Community Service Award and RACV Insurance Award 1996
- Australian Fire Service Medal, National Medal
- Commendations from AFAC and DNRE

*PUBLICATIONS – SHORTLIST*

Incoll, R A (1997) *City of Whitehorse Bushland Reserves Fire Management Strategy*, and 2001 and 2010 Revisions of the Strategy. Online at:  
<http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/Exec%20Draft%20Bushland%20Reserves%20Fire%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

Incoll, R A (1995) *Firebombing in Australia*, Wildfire, December 1995

Incoll, R A, (1994) *Asset Protection in a fire-prone environment*. Paper presented to the Victorian National Parks Association Seminar on Fire and Biodiversity, October 1994, 7 pp.

Incoll, R A (1994) (ed) *Use of Aircraft for Firebombing in Australia*. Position paper, Australian Fire Authorities Council.

Incoll R A & Grant S (1994) *The Wildfire Simulator and its future for both rural and urban Fire Services*. Proceedings of the Australian Fire Authorities Council Conference "Fire Services for now and the future", Fremantle, November 1994.

Incoll R A (1994) *Effectiveness of Firebombing in Victoria, Australia*. Proceedings of The Australian Fire Authorities Council Conference "Fire Services for now and the future", Fremantle, November 1994.

Incoll R A (1994) *Some aspects of providing for the health and safety of forest firefighters*. Worksafe Australia Seminar Sydney 3 June 1994.

Incoll R A (1994) "What can we do about Wildfire?" *The Fireman*, September 21

Incoll R A (1993) *A Multi Agency Incident Control System for use at Wildfires in Victoria*. Proceedings 10th Annual Conference, AARFA.

Rothsay H & Incoll R A (1993) *Cooperation for Wildfire Suppression in Victoria*. Proceedings 9th Annual Conference AARFA.