



Hazelwood Inquiry info/DPC@DTF

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To Hazelwood Inquiry
info/DPC@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

1 attachment



mine-fire-enquiry.docx

Title: ms

First Name: maria

Surname: Benedetti

Organisation represented (if applicable): n/a

Email address:

Home or office phone:

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Origin and circumstances of fire, Response to fire by Public Health Officials, Response to fire by Other Government Agencies, Other (please state)

If Other please state here: Willingness of external political groups to manipulate the people of Morwell to support their own agendas.

How is this fire any different to Black Saturday in the Valley -

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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I understand that this is an opportunity to share how the mine fire has affected me. I would like to take the time to share some thoughts with you in regard to this. – I was until recently, a resident of Morwell. I was a member of Advance Morwell, Fire Fighter in Morwell, a long term supporter of Rotary Club of Morwell, a volunteer for many activities in Morwell, and have attempted to run events to lift the community spirit in Morwell. Whilst I now live in Hazelwood North, I am still linked to Morwell by both people and the businesses I frequent. I believe that my comments are valid as political groups and private companies, to feather their own nests and push their own agendas, have used the residents of Morwell.

In the absence of good leadership, people will follow what is offered.

Fire fighters attend fires both house and bush, on a regular basis where they are engrossed in worse smoke than what surrounded Morwell, for days on end.- with NO RESPIRATORY PROTECTION AT ALL. These volunteers risk their LIVES for the safety of others. Why have they never sought compensation for their inhaling of this smoke. There was one example where a fire fighter who had been fighting a fire in East Gippsland, came to the mine fire. He was tested prior to entry and had a positive reading for Carbon Monoxide. When the nurse was surprised, he did suggest that it was perhaps because he was a farmer (from Maffra) who had come back from East Gippsland, milked his cows early in the morning and then headed over to the mine fire. His question was...is it possible that being tired could cause my reading to be high? She answered that this is possible. (I know this story because the farmer shared it with me). So... have we tested people generally to see what their readings are? Several people attended the mine fire and were high before they began. – Not saying that they should not have been tested, but it was this testing and the hit and miss reporting of the outcomes, that have caused people to feel at risk for their lives and health.

Private Industry Suffers - Black Saturday resulted in homes and lives being lost. No one would dare consider this to be less than a tragedy. As a resident of Hazelwood North who was in the path of the fire prior to the wind change, I find it incredible to note that the 'bush' that I watched burn was actually plantation forest. This plantation forest enabled the fire to 'rush' with intensity towards the township of Traralgon south and surrounds – FOR DAYS. People lost everything.- Yet, as far as I know, they did not try to sue the plantation owners.....why? Perhaps, the seriousness of their situation was far worse than what has occurred in Morwell, so those wanting to whip up a frenzy, thought better of it. Sometimes, there are more important things than getting money from those who have also suffered. Also, perhaps plantation fires are not political enough for those agencies focused on alternative energies to jump on the wagon. **I would like you to explain how the plantation business and the incredible damage caused by it burning out of control is in any way different to the mine fire. (both lit by others and both used hundreds of resources to try to put out) – the only difference is the community it effected.**

Clean up/ Dust - Black Saturday caused hundreds of houses to be covered in ash. Many households had pool pumps break down whilst they attempted to filter the ash on the pool blanket. My house was coated in ash and it took 2 weekends just to clean the outside – let alone the smoke smell inside the house. Did ANYONE seek compensation for this clean up? I know I didn't. No other person I know even considered such a thing. Was there an inquiry into the Plantation response, or was there just an inquiry into the way the CFA and essential services responded to the call? (Yes, lets consider how many CFA guys risked everything). This fire did not smoke over Morwell, but did so over Traralgon, Hazelwood North/ South etc. Why is this situation any different?

Media – I watched news footage of suggested CFA member speaking third hand about information in the mine. This footage was put out and never questioned. Nowhere would this type of evidence be acceptable.

Union leaders were given free reign in regard to the state of the mine. If the mine was in such a bad state, why hadn't they highlighted it prior to the fire? Why hadn't they ensured the safety of their members? - Surely these people need to be held accountable for their lack of action. You need to be careful when you say something is a problem. You need to be certain that you are not a large part of it. (if they are not in trouble for their lack of action, then they should be held accountable for whipping up the frenzy and causing great stress to those who did not need it)

People who had been retired for years were interviewed. What do they really know about what goes on now? Surely if we talk about slander and malicious rumours etc, why are these individuals not held to the same rigid guidelines as the rest?

The media – television, radio and print, need to be held accountable for their part in causing the public to FEAR what was going on. They need to be held accountable for the one sided view they continued to present to the public. People noted several times on social media, how they had been interviewed but when their opinion, information or factual knowledge did not support the fear, their interview was not included.

Latrobe City – Need to be held accountable for their role in causing fear in the Morwell area. When they decided to move their workers, the only thing the people of Morwell could conclude was that the council knew something that they did not.

Australia Post – Why did they stop delivering the mail? All these agencies need to justify what information they were given to make such decisions. If they were given real information, why was it not shared with the community? If they were not, what justification did they have in doing what they did?

Department of Health – This department should have been more proactive in ensuring the correct information was disseminated sooner rather than later. In the absence of the correct information, all the wrong information will be accepted. – As a worker in Traralgon, there were people who were asking us how

we were going to protect them. How were we going to ensure that the smoke was not drifting that far? Why would they think we needed to protect them in Traralgon? What did they think we had to protect them from? Will we all need to stop burning our wood heaters? – same output!– Because the information was not given quickly, efficiently and in a forceful way, everything was up for question.

Those groups feeding on the ignorance of others should be held to the highest accountability. Faces on the TV that were not residents of Morwell were the loudest. Why were they so vocal? Why were they willing to lie about the ‘death potential’. Why was a solicitor writing in the local paper about asbestos in regard to this smoke? Why?

This experience will continue to segregate the Latrobe Valley residents. The damage in this activity has not been done by the Mine Fire, but by the people who tried to take advantage of each other. The damage will be ongoing and last for many years. In fact, perhaps the owners of the Mine, may reconsider their willingness to sponsor and support all those sporting clubs and agencies such as Rotary etc in Morwell into the future – I am not speaking for them, but I know I would reconsider it if I were the owner.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission. I have been very cross for quite a few months now. Not sure how you decide what you do, but please consider those of us who are actually affected by the reputation of our home that has been caused by outsiders and people who live in Morwell.

Thank you.