



Fw: Morwell Mine Fire Submission

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Submission

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10/05/2014 09:17 PM

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cc

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Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

Title: Mr

First Name: David

Surname: Reid

Email address: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Measures taken by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire, Application and administration of regulatory regimes, Response to fire by Emergency Services, Response to fire by Public Health Officials

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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Hazelwood mine fire inquiry submission

Submission written by David Reid

I am a volunteer firefighter in the CFA. I was not involved in the firefighting effort at the mine fire. I am making this submission in a personal capacity as a resident of Victoria who was not directly affected by the mine fire, but closely followed news of the event.

The Hazelwood coal mine fire was a disaster that had multiple impacts over an extended period. It demanded a significant amount of resources from multiple agencies. It also posed a threat to the health of a large number of people in the Latrobe Valley. This health threat was not just an acute one, but there are possible long term impacts from exposure to smoke and ash from the fire. The fire raises multiple questions about how such disasters should be managed. It is likely that with its increasing population and the effects of climate change, Victoria could face more disasters of a similar scale and complexity in the future. It is essential that we are better prepared for such events in the future and able to prevent or mitigate their impacts.

I hope the inquiry can address the following questions:

Did the operators of the Hazelwood mine have sufficient fire prevention plans and equipment in place prior to the fire breaking out? Were additional fire prevention measures implemented when extreme fire danger conditions were forecast?

Were the staffing levels of Victoria's fire services adequate to cope with this disaster? Were there adequate procedures in place to monitor fatigue of firefighters and other emergency services staff working significant amounts of overtime?

Was there sufficient use of breathing apparatus by firefighters? Were firefighters put into situations without breathing apparatus when air pollution levels were high enough to pose a risk to their health and safety?

Was the monitoring of air pollution levels and publication of data by the EPA sufficient?

Was the decision to evacuate vulnerable residents in Morwell South made too late? Should the partial evacuation have occurred at an earlier stage when it was already apparent the fire would burn for weeks?

What measures have been put in place to monitor the long term health of Latrobe Valley residents exposed to high levels of smoke and ash over several weeks? If Latrobe Valley residents suffer future health problems linked to the mine fire will they be able to access compensation?

Were the emergency management arrangements in Victoria appropriate and sufficient to cope with a disaster of this scale? In particular as the disaster involved a response from multiple agencies was there sufficient communication and coordination between those agencies?