



Fw: Morwell Mine Fire Submission

info to: [REDACTED]
Sent by: info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au

13/05/2014 09:53 AM

Submission

----- Forwarded by [REDACTED]/HAZELWOODINQUIRY on 13/05/2014 09:53 AM -----



Hazelwood Inquiry info/DPC@DTF

11/05/2014 11:16 PM

To Hazelwood Inquiry
info/DPC@DTF

cc

bcc

Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

Title: Ms

First Name: Naomi

Surname: Farmer

Email address: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Origin and circumstances of fire, Measures taken by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire, Response to fire by Hazelwood Coal Mine, 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.

Upload Submission:

<http://hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/formidable/Inquiry-submission.doc>

User Information

User-Agent (Browser/OS): Mozilla/5.0 (Macintosh; Intel Mac OS X 10_5_8) AppleWebKit/534.50.2 (KHTML, like Gecko) Version/5.0.6 Safari/533.22.3

Referrer:

<http://hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au/make-a-submission/online-submissions/>



Inquiry-submission.doc

My name is Naomi Farmer. I am the daughter of one of the mine workers in Hazelwood mine and I wrote several articles about the fire crisis as it was happening – this means a lot of people wanted to tell me various things that were happening that they witnessed. I have included the most important information here.

The fire:

It has been clear in the mine for a number of years that safety is declining. The company has been quite explicit with that they are not willing to pay money for safety precautions. Coal is self combustible and therefore there are regular fires. But the sprinklers system no longer covers all of the exposed coal. Plus fire fighters employed in the mine have been reduced.

It has been reported to me that there was a fire in the mine on Saturday the 8th of Feb that had two workers go to try to extinguish it but they could not and they were told to leave it. This fire developed into the fire in the Southern batters.

When the bushfire spread into the mine fire precautions such as cutting back the undergrowth around the mine had not been taken. The bush fire actually moved across an area of mine which had its sprinkler system working and did not catch hold. But it did catch hold further along where the sprinkler system was no longer operating.

Recommendation: the sprinkler system be examined and GDF Suez ordered to adequately maintain the system and reinstall sprinklers where there is no longer a functioning sprinkler

Recommendation: the exposed coal be covered over and capped

Recommendation: GDF Suez reemployes its firefighters

Dealing with the fire:

It was clear from all the statements being released by the CFA and other government bodies did not know how to put the fire out. How is it possible that there exists miles of exposed coal with a huge fire risk yet there is no expert or resources ready to deal with a coal fire?

Throughout the fire the main thing for the company and the CFA was maintaining production from the mine. The CFA says explicitly at times this was the case, for example they limited the amount of water used to safeguard the mine infrastructure. GDF Suez was so eager to maintain production that they sent an electrician amongst the flames to reconnect electricity to keep the conveyer belts moving – this man was at such risk that he had to be hosed down by the firefighters as he worked. There is also reports of subcontractors being sent through the back gate of the mine to avoid the CO monitoring at the front gate – these men were also working as CFA volunteers fighting the fire and had CO levels too high to be allowed access past the testing stations. My dad works in the Hazelwood mine in coal winning and his CO levels exceeded the maximum 3 times. Throughout this period he was very sick with flu like symptoms.

Recommendation: in case of future fire production in the mine be halted until the surface fire is extinguished

Recommendation: the CFA prioritise the health and safety of their members and the community rather than the profits of major cooperations

The health impacts:

Throughout the fire the Health Department claimed there was no health impacts, this is in direct contradiction to the experiences of community members: reported directly to me by dozens of people were: headaches/migraines, diarrhoea, rashes with sharp stinging pain, problems breathing, heart problems, sore eyes and infections that become more intense and persistent. One example of one of the pollutants released in this fire is particulate matter (PM 10 and 2.5). Various organisations such as the World Health Department and the Victorian Health Department have conducted studies that prove an increase in PM increases population mortality. Why did the Health Department contradict their own scientific studies and the studies of world experts to claim there was no danger during the smoke crisis?

There were also numerous claims that the government did not know what was in the fire but it is the

case the SECV did studies into what chemicals are produced when brown coal burns.

Recommendation: investigate why the Department of Health's claims about the health impacts and their resulting lack of action were not in line with experts in the field and their own scientific studies

Recommendation: public release the science the health department was using to make its claims

Recommendation: investigate the population mortality to see if the fire did have the impact that has been recorded by various organisations such as the World Health Organisation

Recommendation: an urgent study is conducted to see what chemicals are released when brown coal burns

Recommendation: monitor these chemicals in the air of the Latrobe Valley

Recommendation: in case of future smoke events evacuate the effected population

Thank you for your time and investigation.