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SI-0125

## HAZEL WOOD 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](mailto:info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au).

Title: MR	First Name: W E PAT	Surname: BARTHOLDMEUSZ
Organisation represented (if applicable): <del>Independent Community Advocate</del>		
Email address:	[REDACTED]	
Postal address:	[REDACTED] MERVICK 3840	
Telephone: [REDACTED]	Mobile: [REDACTED]	
<input type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials <input type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies	

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Should the Inquiry consider the request for confidentiality not to be appropriate you will be provided with an opportunity to withdraw your submission or re-submit it in a form suitable for publication.

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## Acknowledgements

### I understand that:

- I can be contacted by the Inquiry in relation to my submission ✓
- Anonymous submission will not be accepted.
- The name or worn or suburb of each submitter will be identified as apart of every published submission. Other contact details will be removed before publishing.
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Signature P. B. Anthony

OR if sending electronically please confirm your acknowledgment by ticking by box

Date

## **Introduction.**

The Morwell-Hazelwood Brown Coal Open Cut (Mine) is a mere fraction of the vast Gippsland Brown Coal Resource which extends from Yarragon in the West to Lakes Entrance in the East from the foot hills of the Great Dividing Range in the North to the Coast in the South. The adjacent township of Morwell sits on a coal field 170 metres deep overlain by overburden (a layer of soil) 17 metres to 25 metres deep, the most economical to excavate but not tenable.

Any recommendations from this inquiry will therefore have a very significant effect on the community and the future operations of the power generation industry.

## **After the Fire. Fire Protection and Buffer Zones**

The bush fires of 1939 and 14 February 1944 swept into the Yallourn Open Cut. The latter resulted in the Judge Stretton Royal Commission. Briefly, the Learned Judge recommended three measures of "Marginal Protection of Town (Yallourn) and Undertaking" which are appropriate to the Morwell-Hazelwood Fire as follows

1. The complete removal of all timber and natural growth over a wide margin area circling the town and area ...
  2. The 'cleaning' of the present forest on the margin.....
  3. A combination of the burning of the undergrowth over a wide marginal area...."
- (Stretton Report, Page 12, Chapter 3)

While it would now be impossible to create appropriate buffer zones around the vast existing three open cuts, the location of timber forests in close proximity has increased the risk of fire and did increase the size of the Morwell-Hazelwood fire.

The exemplary work of the fire-fighters and emergency services in saving the residential areas of Morwell and Moe including Newborough, Tyers and Australian Paper demonstrated the neglect of the basic Stretton recommendations.

Previous major fires were better controlled by one organisation, the SEC which owned and operated the undertakings.

The privatisation of the industry, proposals for granting leases for more open cuts and the purchase and re-sale of power stations and open cuts must increase the risk of fires unless there is one central authority based in the Latrobe Region with responsibility for community and energy asset protection, the preparation and implementation of emergency procedures, and evacuation of people at risk.

**During the Fire. Information Management.**

The State's Chief Health Officer meant well when she said the smoke was harmless and that the intensity of the smoke could be measured by visibility without scarce measuring equipment (my words). The people took this as "Shut up, stop whingeing and get on with it".

What she could have said was "I know that you are suffering, we have not had a situation like this before and we are carrying out urgent research, how can we help?"

The proof of this is the hostility shown to the Doctor at the 1.30pm on 8 May at the Italian-Australian Club when she was called "a Liar" to my disgust. This was one of the most aggressive public meetings I have attended with women in the majority. All these people were going through stages of the "Grief Cycle" – misunderstood, angry, looking for someone to blame, concerned about their children's health.

**A personal note.**

I attended the official meeting at Kernot Hall on Fri 14 February.

The Fire Officer chairing the meeting accepted my offer to calm the meeting at the outset by moving a vote of thanks to the Fire and Emergency Services for saving our Towns. The motion was carried by the audience with a standing ovation.

*Pat Bartholomeusz*  
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